MYSTICISM AND THE UPANIṢADS

Dr. Indulata Das

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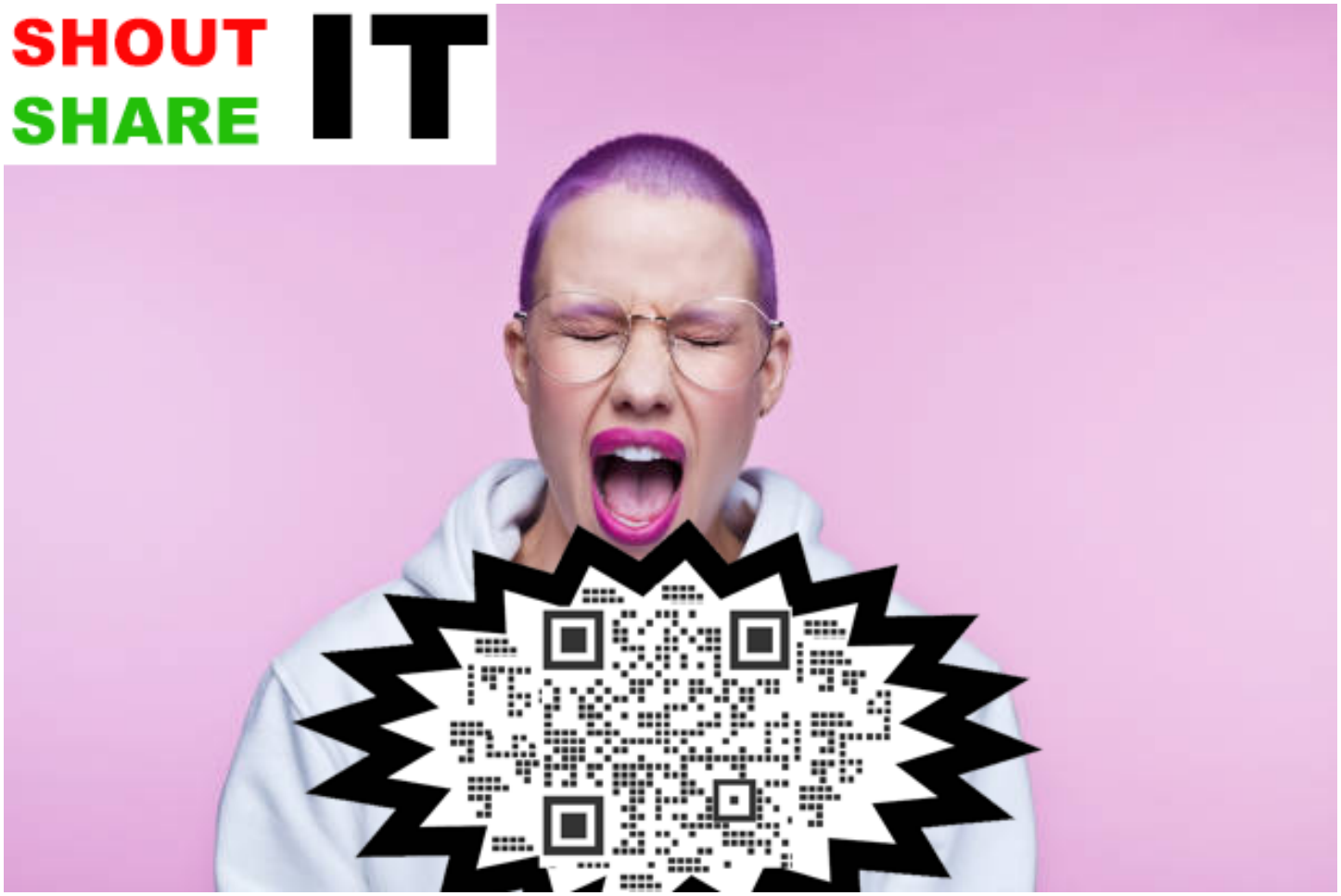
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The direct experience of Reality, expressed through various appellations like God, Brahman etc. and the endeavour thereof is known as Mysticism. The Upanisads are the earliest literature of mysticism not only of India but also of the whole world. They are vivacious with the highest mystic truths and experiences that man could ever achieve. All aspects of mysticism find abundant expression in the Upanisads. The book **MYSTICISM AND THE UPANISADS** is based on an extensive survey of Upanisadic mysticism and that of other prominent religions of the world. The work highlights the varieties of mystic experiences and expressions manifest in Upanisads and elsewhere, in addition to methods for achieving the mystic goal. The comparative analysis of Upanisadic mysticism with that of other important world religions not only reflects the scholarly depth of the author but also makes the work a unique contribution to the literature on mysticism.

This Publication has been brought out with the financial assistance from Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi.

Nag Publishers

(i) 11A/U.A. (Post Office Building), Jawahar Nagar, Delhi-7.

(ii) Jalalpur Mafi, (Chuna-Mirzapur) U.P.

Phone:- 3967975, 3915883, 3957440

© Author

ISBN-81-7081-550-9

First Edition : 2002

Price : Rs.74-00

PRINTED IN INDIA

Published by Surendra Pratap for Nag Publisher, Jawaharnagar, Delhi-7 and printed at G. Print Process, 308/2 Sahazadabagh, Dayabasti, Delhi-110035, Computor Composing A.R. Printers, D-102, New Seelampur, Delhi-53.

DEDICATED

TO

MY

PARENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. S.N. Mishra, Professor & Head, Department of Sanskrit and Dean, Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University who guided me to write this book. My thanks are also to Dr. Nalini Pant and Mrs. and Mr. Umesh Dube for encouragement and friendly gestures, which helped me in more than one ways.

I am grateful to National Library, Kolkata, Orissa State Museum Library, Bhubaneswar, Central Library, BHU, Malviya Bhavan Library, BHU, Goenka Library Varanasi, BJB College Library, Bhubaneshwar, Shailabala Women's College Library, Cuttack, Sadasiva Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya Library, Puri, Orissa State Library, Bhubaneshwar, Reading University Library, Reading, UK, which have provided me ample materials about the Indian and non-Indian mysticisms of the world.

I would be failing in my duties without acknowledging the support of Dr. Taradatt, my husband.

Lastly, I thank Nag Publishers for their interest in publishing the book.

Indulata Das

ABBREVIATIONS

At.Up.	–	Aitareya Upaniṣad
B.Up.	–	Barāhopaniṣad
B.S.	–	Brahmasūtra
B.S.S.B.	–	Brahmasūtra Śānkara Bhāṣya
Br.Up.	–	Bṛḥadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
Ch.Up.	–	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
G.S.	–	Gheranḍa Saṁhitā
H.Y.P.	–	Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā
Is.Up.	–	Iśāvāsyopaniṣad
Kn.Up.	–	Kenopaniṣad
Kth.Up.	–	Kaṭhopaniṣad
M.B.	–	Mahābhārata
Mdk.K.	–	Māṇḍūkya Kārika
Mdk.Up.	–	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
Mnd.Up.	–	Muṇḍakopaniṣad
P.D.	–	Pañcadaśī
Pr.Up.	–	Praśnopaniṣad
Qt.	–	Quoted by
S.B.	–	Śānkara Bhāṣya
S.S.	–	Śiva Saṁhitā
Sv.Up.	–	Śvetāśvtara Upaniṣad
T.Up.	–	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
Up.Sāhasrī	–	Upadeśa Sāhasrī
Y.S.	–	Yogasūtra

Pronunciation and Diacritical Marks

ā	–	आ
ī	–	ई
ū	–	ऊ
ṛ	–	ऋ
ḷ	–	ऌ
aṁ	–	अं
ṅ	–	ङ
ca	–	च
cha	–	छ
chha	–	च्छ
ñ	–	ञ
ṭa	–	ट
ṭha	–	ठ
ḍa	–	ड़
ḍha	–	ढ़
śa	–	श
ṣa	–	ष
kṣa	–	क्ष
jña	–	ज्ञ

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INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of creation, man has been incessantly craving for happiness. The material world has failed miserably to pacify the conflagration of human desire to enjoy a boundless bliss. The objects of pleasure, instead of extinguishing the desires, have manifolded them. Man is yet to overcome his sorrows with the help of the objects of the material world.

Having realised the insufficiency of the outer world, the venerable sages of the past had turned the direction of their expedition from the outer world to the inner one and discovered the ever-coveted treasure of treasures, the peace, the respite of the soul, the happiness eternal. The exploration of man ended fruitfully. The sages did succeed in discovering the path to endless bliss.

Without consuming the results selfishly, the kind-hearted, magnanimous, benevolent sages wanted to transmit the secrets of their adventures to the world through deserving posterity, who could successfully pass on the same to others, without causing it to perish on the way.

For the careful protection and transmission of this precious knowledge, it was unavoidable to impart it to the deserving, the reliable person, who could, not only acquire it, but also preserve it and carefully pass it yet to another person, for further transmission. Since the deserving disciple received the serious knowledge from the competent master in an intimate atmosphere, the knowledge has been significantly named UPANIṢAD

which literally means "sitting near" signifying the intimacy of the disciple and the teacher which further signifies the gravity and seriousness of the knowledge.

The Word Upaniṣad

The word "Upaniṣad" has been derived from the root "sad" by prefixing "upa" and "ni" and suffixing "kvip" to it. The root "sad" stands for three meanings[1], viz. split up, go and loosen.

In accordance with the triplicity of the rootal meaning, Sankara presents threefold definition to the term Upaniṣad. First, it is the knowledge which destroys the seeds of worldly existence like ignorance etc[2]. Secondly, it is the Brahmavidyā or the knowledge of Brahman, which leads the aspirants to Brahman[3]. Thirdly it also signifies the knowledge, which loosens or weakens the miseries of hovering in a womb, birth and old age etc[4]. Upaniṣad, according to Sankara, can also mean the valuable scriptures, which contain the mentioned knowledge just as ghee is called longevity indirectly[5].

Sayana defines it as Brahmavidyā or theosophy. The prefix according to him, means "near", and nothing other than one's own self (which is Brahman) is nearer to a being[6].

Max Muller takes the word to mean an assembly. Says he, "The history and the genius of the Sanskrit language leave little doubt that Upaniṣad meant originally

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1. Kth Up. S.B.1.1.1.
2. अविद्यादेः संसारबीजस्य विशरणात् (Ibid)
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Sandal: Philosophical Teachings in the Upaniṣads, P.2.

session, particularly a session consisting of pupils, assembled at a respectable distance round their teacher"[1].

According to Deussen, "Certain mysterious words, expressions and formulas which are only intelligible to the initiated, are described as Upaniṣads"[2].

Oldenberg tries to derive the word Upaniṣad from "Upāsanā"[3].

Being the last and the most essential part of Vedas, it is called Vedānta. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad[4] views that "Brahman" rests in the Upaniṣads, which are the essential parts of the Vedas.

Number of the Upaniṣads

It is hard to determine the actual number of Upaniṣ ads. The Muktikopaniṣad considers 108 Upaniṣads to be the most important of them, remaining silent about the total number[5]. Darasikoh has translated 50 Upaniṣads to Persian. Paul Deussen has translated 60 Upaniṣads but accepts 14 as authentic. Max Muller translated 11 Upaniṣ ads whereas Hume translated 13 of them.

According to Gargyayana, the actual number of the original Upaniṣads is 16, four belonging to each Veda. In accordance with the need of the time, they were subsequently elaborated into one hundred and eight and two hundred and fifty by Brāhmaṇas and Ṛṣis respectively. So the Upaniṣads amounted to three hundred

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1. The Sacred Books of the East (The Upaniṣads), P.lxxxi.
2. The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, P.16.
3. Ibid.
4. तद्वेद गुह्योपनिषत्सु गूढ़म् (5.6)
5. सर्वोपनिषदां मध्ये सारमष्टोत्तरशतम् (1.30)

and fifty six, which are only commentaries on the original sixteen[1].

It shows that there are a number of Upaniṣads counting at least more than 108. Sankara has commented on 11 Upaniṣads viz. Iśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍukya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Śvetāśvatara, which are regarded as the most important ones. But it is yet to be decided whether the commentary on Śvetāśvatara is by Ādi Sankara or not.

Source and Subject Matter

The Upaniṣads form generally the last chapters of Bhāhmaṇas related to the Saṁhitās of different Vedas and mainly deal with the knowledge of Brahman, the immanence of Brahman in the world and the identity of the individual self with Brahman. Occasional discussions are also found on the exposition of the knowledge of Om and other matters, like different Vidyās, meditation and the practice of Yoga. A brief description of the sources and the subject matters of the major Upaniṣads is as follows:

Iśa Upaniṣad

The Iśa Upaniṣad, which is otherwise known as the Iśāvāsyopaniṣad, because it starts with the same words,[2] forms the last and the fortieth chapter of the Vājaseneya Saṁhitā of the Vājaseneya School of Yajurveda. The essential theme of the Upaniṣad is the immanence of the Supreme Reality in the world. It attaches immense

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1. Vidyaranya: Studies in the Upaniṣads, P.iv.
2. ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वम् (Is. up. 1.)

importance on right living in the world by realising the truth that the world is but pervaded by God. It does not find it impossible to lead a divine life in the world.

It is the only Upaniṣad, which forms the part of a Saṁhitā. It is a very small one with no division of chapters.

Kena Upaniṣad

The Kena Upaniṣad belongs to the Sāmaveda and is a part of the Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa. Like Iśopaniṣad, it also derives its name from the opening words of the text[1]. It has four chapters of which the first two are in verses and the latter ones in prose. The poetry section deals with the Nirguṇa Brahman, whereas the prose section discusses the Saguṇa Brahman.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

The Kaṭha Upaniṣad, otherwise known as the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad, belongs to the Taittirīya school of Yajurveda. It has the famous story of the child prodigy Naciketā and Yama, the god of death. Having won the heart of Yama, with his sincerity and dispassion, the brilliant child acquires the knowledge of self from the death god.

The Upaniṣad mainly deals with the above-mentioned knowledge by which one becomes free from the cycle of birth and death. It also hints at the Yogic path for the realisation of Brahman.

Praśna Upaniṣad

The Praśna Upaniṣad belongs to the Atharvaveda. It derives its name from the six questions put to the

---

1. केनेषितम् (Kn. UP. 1.1)

preceptor by the disciples, which form the six sections of the Upaniṣad. The Upaniṣad deals with the ultimate cause, discusses about Om and exposes the relation of the Supreme Reality to the world.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, which is derived from the root "Muṇḍa" to shave (the hair of the head), may be taken to hint towards the shaven Sannyāsins who deserve the knowledge of the Upaniṣad. It belongs to the Atharvaveda, and has three chapters, which have two sections each. It distinguishes between the higher and the lower knowledge, which refers to the knowledge of Brahman and that of the world respectively.

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, which is very important but very small in size, contains twelve sentences only. It belongs to the Atharvaveda. It divides the human psychological states and exposes the mystery of Om. It identifies the three quarters of Ātman with the three letters of Om viz. A, U and M. It identifies the fourth quarter of Brahman with the partless Om.

The first commentary, written on the Upaniṣad is the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, composed by Gaudapada who is said to be the teacher of Sankara's teacher.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad

The Taittirīya Upaniṣad belongs to the Taittirīya school of Yajurveda. It is divided into three Vallīs. The first Vallī, known as Śikṣāvalli, deals with the science of phonetics and pronunciation and the duties of an ideal

man. The second and third, known as Brahmānandavallī and Bhṛguvallī respectively deal with the knowledge of the Supreme Self.

Aitareya Upaniṣad

The Aitareya Upaniṣad belongs to the Ṛgveda and comprises of the iv, v and vi chapters of the Aitareya Āraṇyaka. It aims at leading the mind of the sacrificer from the outer to the inner meaning of sacrifices, because the true sacrifice is always internal. According to Sankara, there are three kinds of people, of which one group cares only for the material possessions, the second wants liberation gradually by attaining the world of Hiraṇyagarbha, and the third category is eager to get liberated at the earliest. The Aitareya Āraṇyaka (iii) is meant for the first category, whereas the second chapter of the same is meant for the second category. The Aitareya Upaniṣed is meant for the third category.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad belongs to the Sāmaveda. It has eight chapters, out of which the first and the second chapters discuss the liturgy, the doctrine of creation, the significance of Om and the meaning and names of Sāman. The remaining chapters deal with the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

Bṛhadāraṇyaka forms a part of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the Yajurveda. It consists of three Kāṇḍas or sections. The first Kāṇḍa expounds the identity of the individual self with the universal self. The second Kāṇḍa deals with

the methods of worship and meditation, and the stages of self-realisation viz. the Śravaṇa, Manana and Nididhyāsana. The third is Khila Kāṇḍa, which deals with certain methods of worship, meditation etc.

Of the two recensions of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa viz Kāṇva and Mādhyandina, the former has been commented upon by Sankara.

- **Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad**

The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad belongs to the Taittirīya school of Yajurveda. It derives its name most probably from the sage who taught it first[1]. The main theme of the Upaniṣad is that it holds Rudra (Brahman) as the material and efficient cause of the world. It is the Upaniṣad, which uses the word Māyā for the first time in the same sense as is used in the Advaita Vedanta. It gives a few details about Yogic practice.

Dates of the Upaniṣads

It is a difficult task to guess the dates of the Upaniṣ ads precisely. It has been a traditional belief that the Vedas (which comprehend Upaniṣads as well) are without beginning, which suggests nascence of the Upaniṣads simultaneous to the creation of the Universe!

A minute analysis reveals that the composition of various Upaniṣads may be safely attributed to various centuries, not excluding even the Moghul period[2]. Ranade

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1. Sv.Up., 6.21.
2. During the Moghul period, probably under the patronage of Darasikoh was written the Allahopanisad, which was reckoned to the Atharva Veda (the word Allah being accepted as a synonym of Varuṇa). Swami Dayanand has inserted ten verses

fixes the upper and the lower limits of composition of the major Upaniṣads between 1200 and 600 BC and "the later Upaniṣads of the above canon", according to him "may be seen to be dovetailed into that next period of Indian thought when Buddhism was germinating"[1] Radhakrishnan fixes the date of the early Upaniṣads as 1000 B.C. Kaṭhopaniṣad, according to him is not very antique. "We find in it" says Radhakrisnan, "elements of the Sāṁkhya and Yoga system. It also quotes freely from the other Upaniṣads and Bhagavad-Gītā"[2].

Thus, the earliest and the authentic Upaniṣads are certainly pre-Buddhistic, although the minor ones have been composed in the later centuries. The period after the composition of Vedic hymns and before the advent of Buddhism is thus the period of composition of the major Upaniṣads.

The theory of the modernity of Kaṭhopaniṣad does not stand adverse criticism. It is more logical to think that Gītā, which is called the milk of the Upaniṣadic cows, has borrowed from the Kaṭhopaniṣad instead of holding that the latter has done so from the former. Secondly, the elements of Sāṁkhya and Yoga are not sufficient to disprove the antiquity of the Upaniṣad, since like all other schools of philosophy, the said schools could have taken their basic ideas from the Upaniṣads, particularly from the Katha itself.

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of this Upaniṣad in his Satyārtha Prakāsh, (Ch. Xiv, Sandal: Philosophical Teaching in the Upaniṣads, P. 12.)

1. A Constructive Survey of the Upaniṣadic Philosophy, P.12.
2. Indian Philosophy, P.41-42.

Seers of the Upaniṣads

It is a misfortune but a pride at the same time that the ancestors, who actually brought the sublime ideas of Upaniṣads to existence, have in almost all the places, not cared to express their identity. As a result, the Upaniṣads come down to us mostly as dialogues between mythical characters like Nārada, Sanatkumār, Yama, Naciketā, Prajāpati and Indra etc. Of course, it is difficult to say that these names are mythological and hence fictitious. Mythology, which has a later date to its credit than the Upaniṣads, could possibly have borrowed the names from the Upaniṣads.

Apart from the above-mentioned names, other personalities like Uddālaka, Śvetaketu, Jaivāli, Satyakāma, Pratardana, Ajātśatru, Varuṇa, Yājñavalkya, Gārgī, Maitreyī, Mahīdāsa, Śāndilya etc. find place in the Upaniṣads. But, there is no clue to prove that the names mentioned are mere characters and have nothing to do with the actual seers, responsible for the great literature.

The present work concerns the mystic portion of the Upaniṣads, which is the essence of these, and for which the Upaniṣads, have become the crowning glory of the mystic world. Says Zaehner, "no treatment of mysticism that claims to be serious can afford to ignore the all important Indian contribution"[1].

A humble attempt, therefore, has been made in the ensuing chapters, to explore into the mystic depth of the Upaniṣads devoting, of course, the first chapter to the meaning and matter of mysticism. In the last chapter, a study has been made about the various important non-Indian mysticisms of the world and a comparison has been done with the Upaniṣadic mysticism.

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1. Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, P.33.

CHAPTER 1

Mysticism: What it is

The origin of the word "mysticism" may be traced back to the German words "mystik" or "mystizysmus" or Greek words "mustes" or "mystes" or Latin word "mystica".

The word "mystik" stands for an "immediate experience of a divine-human intercourse and relationship"[1]. "Mystizysmus" stands for three meanings viz. (I) cult of supernatural, (ii) theosophical pursuits and (iii) spiritualistic exploitation of physical research[2]. The Greek word "mustes" or "mystes" means a man who is initiated to know the abstruse knowledge of birth and death[3]. The Latin word "mystica" means mystery[4].

The term mysticism has a variety of connotations. It means "mist" (might suggest something vague) and mystery (suggesting miracles or something inexplicable). It is also invariably associated with religion or religious practices. The Oxford English Dictionary presents the following meanings for the word mysticism:

1. The opinions, mental tendencies or habits of thought and feeling, characteristics of mystics; mystical doctrines or spirit; belief in the possibilities of union in the Divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation;

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1. Hastings: Encyclopedia Of Religion and Ethics, P.83.
2. Ibid.
3. Caturvedi: Rahasyavād, P.3
4. Caudhury: Adhunika Oriya Kabitare Rahasyavādi Cetanā, P.19.

reliance on spiritual intuition or exalted feelings as the means of acquiring knowledge of mysteries inaccessible to intellectual apprehension.

2. As a term of reproach (a) from the hostile point of view, mysticism implies self-delusion or dreamy confusion of thought; hence the term is often applied loosely to any religious belief to which these evil qualities are imputed; (b) sometimes applied to philosophical mysterious agencies of which no rational account can be given[1].

For the present context, the first meaning is relevant.

During the pre-Christian times, the Greek word "ΜUOTIKÓς" derived from the verb "ΜÚω", which means to close (especially the eyes) was used in connection with the mysterious religions, whose rites were kept secret from all except the initiated. In the New Testament, mysticism occupies an insignificant place except for a few expressions like "I am instructed both to be full and hungry"[2].

Philo uses the word mysticism for the versification of the technical exposition of the abstruse problems. Origen and Clement used the word for the theological problems of Christianity, or for the allegorical interpretation of Bible. The allegorical interpretations of the Gospels and Testaments were called mystical by Alexandrian Christians at a later period.

Although the word "mysticism" is alien to India, the equivalent meaning has been, in most of the Indian languages, manifested through the indigenous word

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1. The Oxford English Dictionary, vol. x, P.176
2. Woods (ed): Understanding Mysticism, (Mysticism/An essay on the History of the word - L.Bouyer) P.43

"Rahasyavāda", which is derived from the Sanskrit root "Rah" by suffixing "Asun" to it. The Medinīkoṣa provides three meanings for the above-mentioned root viz (i) essence (तत्त्व); (ii) intercourse (रत) and (iii) secrecy (गुह्य)[1].

In the Ṛgveda and a few places of Gītā, the word "Rahas" has been used to connote loneliness (or secrecy)[2]. But in other places of Gītā the word "Rahasyam" has been used to mean something most essential[3].

The very word "Rahasyavāda", as such, for the first time appeared in the monthly journal "Saraswatī" in the year 1927, being used by Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi[4]. But, to convey the same meaning, many other words before and after the date have been in use in various languages of India. In Bengali, the word "Marimiāvād" is used to yield the same meaning. In Gītā again, words like "Guhyādguhyataram[5]", "Sarvaguhyatamam[6]" and "Paramaguhya[7]" convey the same meaning. Years ago, the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad used the words 'Parāvidyā' and 'Brahmavidyā' to bring the very meaning home[8].

It is clear from above that, in whatever word it may be clothed, the subject is antique. The antiquity of it may

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1. रहस्तत्त्वे रते गुह्ये (32.31).
2. रहसूरिवाग: (Rg.v. 2.29.1)
   योगी युञ्जीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थित: (Gītā, 6.10)
3. भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् (Ibid, 4.3)
4. Caturvedi: Rahasyavad, P. 3
5. इति ते ज्ञानमाख्यातं गुह्याद् गुह्यतरं मया (Gītā, 18.63)
6. सर्वगुह्यतमं भूय: श्रृणु मे परमं वच: (Ibid, 18.64)
7. य इमं परमं गुह्यं मद्भक्तेष्वभिधास्यति। (Ibid, 18.68)
8. Mnd. Up, 1.1.1, 1.1.4

well be inferred by the statement of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣ ad that, Brahmā (the creator) who is the first among the gods, imparted the highest knowledge (Brahmavidyā) to his son Atharvā, who conferred it to sage Angī, who again gave it to Satyabaha, the son of Bhāradwāja.[1] Hence, the Brahmavidyā, or the Parāvidyā, which is now being discussed by the modern scholars as "mysticism" is present from the inception of the universe. Rightly has it been observed by the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics that "Mystical experience is as old as humanity[2]".

What it is not

The very word mysticism, as has been rightly observed by Stace, "is an unfortunate one"[3] since its essential meaning invariably gets confused with the unwanted meanings. As a ramification, the very pronunciation of the very word carries the imagination of the listener to a world, mysterious and uncanny, where inexplicable happenings like curing incurable maladies without treatment, making fortunes without efforts and causing miraculous deeds, take place. Thus "mysticism" is invariably misapprehended as what is called "magic". Of course, there are few confusing similarities between magic and mysticism to confound the common mind. Both magic and mysticism start from the common point i.e. to explore the world unseen and unknown. In both of it, the person concerned receives a few powers, superior to the normal human abilities. Their languages and methods, more over, are not very different from each other.

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1. Mnd. Up., 1.1.1-2
2. Hastings: P. 83
3. Mysticism and Philosophy, P.16

But, it is a serious misnomer to use magic as synonymous to mysticism. Magic wades its way to have a few achievements by propitiating the supernatural powers, whereas the expedition of mysticism is to lose one's isolated identity confined by the narrow boundaries of "I" and "Mine" and experience the boundless.

To end the confusion SN Dasgupta has named magic as the "inferior mysticism"[1]. Underhill thinks that between magic and mysticism "lie the great religions"[2].

An Observation of Definitions

Mysticism, perhaps is the only word hitherto, which has been defined in various ways by various scholars, some taking it as a feeling, some, attitude, some, consciousness, some, way of life, some yet something else. It is not an exaggeration to say that mysticism has received as many definitions as there are definers. Following are a few important definitions.

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines mysticism as "the immediate experience of oneness with Ultimate Reality"[3].

The following scholars define mysticism as an 'attitude':

(i) Caird: "It (mysticism) is that attitude of mind in which all other relations are swallowed in the relations of the soul to God"[4].

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1. Hindu Mysticism, (Preface) P.vii
2. Mysticism, P.70
3. Encyclopedia Britannica, P.1129
4. Inge: Mysticism in Religion, P.31-32

(ii) Ranade: "Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate first hand, intuitive apprehension of God"[1].

Mysticism has been observed as a 'feeling' by the following scholars:

(i)Pfleiderer: "Mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God; it is nothing therefore, more than the fundamental feeling of religion"[2].

(ii)Russel:"Mysticism is, in essence, little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed about the universe"[3].

(iii)James: "Mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect"[4].

Following are a few definitions where mysticism has been accepted as a 'consciousness':

(i) Nettleship: "True mysticism is the consciousness that everything that we experience is an element and only an element in fact i.e. that in being what it is, it is symbolic of something more"[5].

(ii) Stace: "A sensory intellectual consciousness"[6]

Yet for Spurgeon "mysticism is in truth a temper rather than a....system of Philosophy"[7]. Underhill takes it to be a search. "Mysticism" she says, "is seen to be highly specialised form of that search for Reality for

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1. Mysticism in Maharashtra, P.1
2. Qt. Inge: Mysticism in Religion, P.31
3. Mysticism and Logic and other Essays, P.3
4. Varieties of Religious Experience, P.380
5. Qt. Inge: Mysticism in Religion, P.31
6. Teachings of the Mystics, P.328
7. Qt. Caturvedi : Rashasyavāda, P.18

heightened and completed life"[1]. Pathison thinks it to be an "endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the highest.... God ceases to be an object and becomes an experience"[2]. Schweitzer finds it to be "the realisation, glorification and manifestation of a naturally given state of redemption from the world, it is not a struggling and striving to attain to the state"[3].

There are scholars who have still narrowed the sphere of mysticism. For Hocking, it is "a way of dealing with God"[4], whereas for Sircar, it is an "approach to Truth and Reality"[5]. Radhamukul Mukharji thinks that it is the "art of inner adjustment by which man apprehends the universe as a whole in stead of its particular parts"[6]. For BG Kirtikar, it is "a moral discipline having for its objects ... a Self Realisation, within oneself of one's identity with Brahma"[7].

Apart from these, there are definitions, which enlarge the sphere of mysticism so as to accommodate the speculation, experience as well as the endeavour, and as a result appeal to the reader more than any other.

Bennet thinks, even if "by mysticism, it is sometimes meant speculative mysticism, a metaphysical doctrine which proclaims the abstract unity of Godhead and the obliteration in it of the particularity of individual souls and finite objects, with this doctrine, we are not

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1. Mysticism. p.93
2. Qt. Inge: Mysticism in Religion. P.31
3. Indian Thought and its Development. P.77
4. Qt. Caturvedi : Rahasyavāda. P.20
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Qt. Caturvedi :, Rahasyavāda. P.22

concerned, but with mysticism as a way of life, in which the conspicuous element is the immediate experience of God"[1].

So also, Dasgupta gives an appealing definition to the word. For him, "mysticism is not an intellectual theory; it is fundamentally an active, formative, creative, elevating and ennobling principle of life. ... Mysticism means a spiritual grasp of the aims and problems of life in a much real and ultimate manner than is possible to mere reason"[2].

Having observed a series of definitions, it appears that mysticism, primarily, is the experience or a feeling of one's oneness with the Supreme Reality. It also includes the search, the endeavour to attain it, which further includes the moral discipline, the elevation and ennobling of one's life. In the present chapter, mainly, the experience portion is dealt with.

An Experience, Unique

Rabindranath, while he was standing on a corridor and looking at the trees of a garden, suddenly felt as if a screen was removed from his vision and he experienced that the whole universe was pervaded with a unique glory; the world was flooded with bliss and beauty. Sorrows concealed in the layers of his heart had vanished and there was an inundation of light. There was an experience of great unity[3].

Likewise, Tennyson had the unique experience in which "individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade

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1. Ibid, P.23
2. Hindu Mysticism, (Preface) p.ix
3. Jeevan Smṛti (2nd part), Prabhāt Sangīt. P.20

away into boundless being ..., where death was an almost laughable impossibility"[1].

Margaret Prescott Montague elaborates her own experience in the following way: "I saw no new things but I saw all the usual things in a miraculous new light - in what I believe is their true light ... how wildly beautiful and joyous, beyond any words of mine to describe, is the whole life"[2].

In the above expressions and many other expressions not quoted here, it is explicit that the experience sensed by them is more than a normal one. It is a unique experience, which is not normally achieved through the human senses individually or collectively. It is unusual and uncommon but neither imaginary nor hallucinative. It is not the product of a delirious or confused state of mind but a reality.

Even though a reality, it is distinct from the common perception because it is a novel knowledge of the normal phenomenon, unknown so far to the normal mind and senses. It is a mystery unveiled,[3] "a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of doubt"[4]. "It is merely the gate-way to an ampler world"[5].

Before proceeding to discuss further, it is relevant to delve a little deep into the root of such an unusual unique experience. This Phenomenon, in fact, is neither without cause, nor occurs out of the blue, its root lying in the depth of our consciousness itself.

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1. James, Varieties of Religious Experience. P.384
2. Qt. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy, P.83
3. Russel : Mysticism and Logic and other Essays, P.9
4. Ibid
5. Ibid

In the remote past, entering deep into the depth of human consciousness, the great sages found it divided into four states viz. waking, dream, dreamless deep sleep and the fourth one (identified with the Supreme Reality)[1]. The common mind wavers frequently between the first two and occasionally the third. For most of the beings, the fourth is an untrodden region. The entrance into this state, accidental or otherwise, results in the revelation of a knowledge unknown, vision unseen, which naturally has to be a truer and more real an experience. "There still is a higher plane" says Vivekananda, "upon which the mind can work. It can go beyond consciousness. Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so, there is another work which is above consciousness." " ...when the mind gets to that higher state then this knowledge beyond reasoning comes"[2].

It is not, therefore, bound by the restrictions of persons, time and place and can be available to anybody whose doors, for it, are open. Smith says"There is hardly any soil be it ever so barren, where mysticism will not strike root"[3]. But, spontaneously, it occurs rarely to a few for a scanty duration and permanently to those who strive and acquire it.

Categories of Mystic Experience

Concentrating on various mystical experiences, expressed by various mystics, it may broadly be put under the following twin couples of categories viz. (i) Spontaneous and Acquired (ii) Extrovertive and Introvertive.

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1. Mdk. Up.1.-12
2. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (Rājayoga.) P.180,183
3. Woods (ed) : Understanding Mysticism. (Nature and Meaning of Mysticism) p.20

Spontaneous Mystic Experience

The mystic experience which is sudden, unexpected and unsought, about which the mystic is unaware and unprepared, may be named as spontaneous. Most of the experiences of the beginners are spontaneous ones. R Bucke, when for the first time had his experience, he had no idea of it. After a long deep discussion about the English poets with his friends, at about midnight, he was on his way back to home by a hansom. "All at once", he says, "without any warning, I found myself wrapped with a flame-coloured cloud. For an instant, I thought of fire somewhere ... , in the next, I knew that fire was in myself. Directly afterwards there came upon me a sense of exultation of immense joyousness"[1].

Ramkrishna, the great mystic of India had his first mystic experience unexpectedly and under very unusual situation. When life became meaningless to him, without the vision of Mother (the Goddess), under a pang of frustration, he resolved to end his life. Aggrieved, he seized the sword, hanging on the wall of the temple to perpetrate the fatal job and lo! suddenly for him the temple, the doors, the windows- everything vanished away. He saw a boundless consciousness surrounded him from every side like huge thundering waves of ocean, and broke on him. He felt drowning under them, and suffocated, he sagged[2].

When Montague was on a hospital bed, convalescing, she had her experience, all without expectation. She writes, "Entirely unexpectedly (for I had not dreamt of such a thing), my eyes were opened for the first time in

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1. James: Varieties of Religious Experience. P.399
2. Tejasananda : Rāmakrishna Jīvani. P.37

my life. I caught glimpse of the ecstatic beauty of Reality"[1].

J Trevor describes in his autobiography that he sensed the experience while moving on a hillside. He writes "On the way back suddenly, without warning, I felt that I was in heaven- an inward state of peace and joy, assurance indescribably intense, accompanied with a sense of being bathed in a warm glow of light"[2]....

JA Symonds although had his experience many times, it was always unsought. "Suddenly " says he, "at church or in company or when I was reading ... I felt the approach of the mood"[3].

The central characteristic of spontaneous experience is that, along with being abrupt and sporadic, it is transient. It endures for a short duration. The illumination in Bucke remained for a few seconds[4]; Montague had it for twenty minutes[5]. Ramkrishna was engulfed under this ecstasy for two days, in the first instance, although subsequently, he had frequent experiences, one of which is said to have continued for six months. Rabindranath was under it for four days[6].

The mystic, confounded by the unusualness of the experience, initially mistakes it to be a delusion. But, the next instant, it is discovered not only to be a reality; a better reality indeed. "No delusion ... no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder, associated with absolute clearness of mind"[7] says Tennyson. Trevor

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1. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P.83
2. Ibid. p. 396
3. James: Varieties of Religious Experience. P.385
4. Bucke: Cosmic Consciousness. P.10
5. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P.83
6. Tagore: Jeevan Smṛti. P.120-121
7. James: Varieties of Religious Experience. P.384

affirms that dreams cannot stand this test since we wake from them to find that they are dreams. Wanderings of an over-wrought brain too do not stand it. "It is" he reiterates "the highest experience"[1].

There is an experience of immense joy and ecstasy to such a limit that having lost it, the mystic undergoes a severe longing for its regain. Ramkrishna, after his first experience was lost, felt a severe pang of separation. James mentions the experience of a modern scientific man of his religious life in his own words like:

"I remember many occasions ... I turned this way and that in the darkness and groped mentally for the familiar sense of that higher mind of mind"[2].

It is moreover noticed that the spontaneous mystic experience turns a man internally strong and morally unstumbling. Life, for him starts bearing a real and higher meaning. He discovers a lofty, dependable support of living "Whenever, I had any trouble (says the unnamed person mentioned by James) ... or when I was depressed in spirits or anxious about affairs....., I used to fall back for support upon this curious relation, I felt myself to be in this fundamental cosmical 'It'. It was in my side... In fact it was an unfailing fountain of living justice, truth and strength, to which I instinctively turned at times of weakness and it always brought me out"[3]. The spontaneous mystic experience has invariably turned persons religious.

Acquired Mystic Experience

Every individual, as hinted earlier, has the potentiality to an access to this realm of consciousness, to

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1. Ibid. p.397
2. Ibid. p.65
3. Ibid

the enjoyment of boundless bliss. It is, therefore, acquirable by those who strive for attaining it and retain it forever[1]. This acquired mystic experience, in fact, is the experience of true life of perfection when man becomes a complete human being. All his sorrows vanish, not for a while, but for all time to come and he is liberated.

To enter into the state permanently, a methodical progress invariably becomes unavoidable. Almost all religions of the world have their own prescribed methods. From time immemorial, India has her technical and scientific methods of spiritual progress through an all-round development of psycho-physical phenomena, mainly under the name of Yoga. Various methods of physical postures, control of breath and concentration of mind have been elaborately and methodically taught along with development of other moral and spiritual virtues, like non-violence etc. (Other chapters of this book will be devoted for elaborate discussion of acquired mystic experience and methods thereof.)

Extrovertive Mystic Experience

Strictly speaking, the division of mystic experience into extrovertive and introvertive is not a division of kind but that of degree. They are, observes Marquette, "really the successive degrees of a single process"[2].

As suggested by the name, extrovertive experience is an experience of the exterior, a unique experience where all the diversities merge into a single unity and a whole emerges out of parts. "All that a man has here externally in multiplicity is intrinsically one"[3], observes the German

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1. यद् गत्वा न निवर्त्तन्ते (Gītā: 15.6)
2. Introduction to Comparative Mysticism. P.123
3. Otto : Mysticism East and West. P.61

mystic Eckhart. "All blades of grass, wood and stone all things are one"[1]. In the moments of experience, the mystic finds that the multiplicity is the appearance behind which lies the unity, which is real. Writes Aurobindo:

"All contraries were true in one huge spirit"[2]

The oneness behind the diversity is yet to find a better analogy than is presented in the Chāndogya Upaniṣ ad. Just as gold is true, explains the Upaniṣad, behind all golden ornaments, the facial differences being mere names and forms, so also Brahaman, the Supreme Reality is true behind the diversity of the world[3]. All this, in fact, is Brahman[4].

The universe, for the mystic is not only a great unity but an indivisible consciousness as well, not made of dead matter. During his experience, Ramkrishna discovered that everything was soaked with consciousness- the image of the Goddess, the altar, the doorsill; all bustled with consciousness[5]. Bucke, with all emphasis corroborates the same: "I did not merely come to believe" says he, "but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is on the contrary a living presence''[6].

The experience, as stated earlier is not a product of a moment of mental weakness or hallucination but is a real one, a real insight rather. Boehme, the mystic found that "he gazed into the very heart of things"[7]. St. Teresa too discovered that everything contained in God. She did not

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1. Ibid
2. Sāvitrī: 7.7. P. 555
3. Ch. Up. 6.1.5
4. सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म (Ch.Up. 3.14.1)
5. Tejasananda: Ramakrishna Jivani. P. 37
6. James: Varieties of Religious Experience. P. 399
7. Underhill: Mysticism. P. 255

perceive them in their proper form, "and nevertheless", she explains, "the view I had of them was of a sovereign clearness"[1]. Rabindranath also describes of an actual vision of the formless[2].

Spontaneous mystic experiences are invariably extrovertive ones. A few characteristics of extrovertive mystic experience are common with that of the introvertive one, hence will be discussed later on.

Introvertive Mystic Experience

Introvertive mystic experience has been named "inward way" or "introversion" by Underhill. Whereas in the extrovertive type, the mystic discovers a unity among the diversity, in the introvertive one, he finds himself dissolved in the same.

In the introvertive mystic experience, there is an experience of complete vacuum not of unconsciousness but of pure consciousness, an experience of void or nothingness. "The God-seeing man" says Ruysbroeck, "can always enter naked.... into the inmost part of his spirit. .... It (his spirit) is undifferentiated and without distinction, and therefore, it feels nothing but the unity"[3].

It is a state where the individuality is lost in the unity. It is like a vast ocean where all identities are merged. There is no boundary of 'I', 'you', 'me' or 'mine':

"All was one, there was no duality

No pretence of mine or thine

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1. James: Varieties of Religious Experience. P. 411
2. अपरूपके देखे गेलेम दूटि नयन मेले (Gītānjali, p.174), अरूपेर कत रूपदर्शन (Ibid, P-21)
3. Qt. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P. 94

The vast orb of heaven, with its myriads
Of outgoing and incomings was concealed,
In a single point"

Experienced the Sufi mystic, Jami[1]. Ruysbroeck calls it a "dark silence where all lovers lose themselves[2]".

Time and space become unreal to the mystic. The future and past lose their identity in an eternal now. Says Aurobindo:

"She passed beyond Time into eternity,

Slipped out of Space and became the Infinity"[3].

As has been stated earlier, there is no strict division between extrovertive and introvertive mystic experience, and they have a few common characteristics between them. Immense joy and happiness is common to any kind of mystic experience. It is noticed that both experiences leave a feeling of sacredness and peace. Ramakrishna went to the extent of feeding a cat with the offerings, meant for Goddess Kali, as everything for him was the Mother, not excluding the cat[4]. There is always an expression of paradoxicality in both the mystic experiences. There is also a feeling of ineffability in both of them. The mystic finds his vocabulary scanty to clothe his experiences. "One reason why I disliked this kind of trance" says Symond ‘‘was that I could not describe it to myself.... I can not now even find words to render it intangible"[5]. Stace compares both the mystic experiences as the following[6]:

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1. Marquette: Introduction to Comparative Mysticism. P. 172
2. Qt. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P.113.
3. Savitri. 7.7. P. 555
4. Tejasananda: Ramakrishna Jivani. P. 38-39
5. James: Varieties of Religious Experience. P. 385
6. Mysticism and Philosophy. P. 131-132

Extrovertive	Introvertive
1. The unifying vision, all things are one.	1. The unitary consciousness, the one, the void.
2. The more concrete apprehension of the one as an inner subjectivity or life in all things.	2. Non-spatial, non-temporal.
3. Sense of objectivity of reality	3. Sense of subjectivity of relality.
4. Blessedness, peace etc.	4. Blessedness, peace etc.
5. Feeling of holy, sacred or divine	5. Feeling of holy, sacred or divine.
6. Paradoxicality	6. Paradoxicality
7. Alleged by mystics to be ineffable.	7. Alleged by mystics to be ineffable.

In the extrovertive, it is clear, the mystic is conscious about the unity of the outer world, and in the introvertive he finds himself dissolved in the same unity. These two, therefore, are like two rungs of the same ladder. The extrovertive is the lower experience and introvertive, the highest. "It (extrovertive) is an incomplete kind of experience" says Stace, "which finds its completion and fulfilment in the introvertive kind of experience"[1].

Mystics all over the world, found through the ages can be placed roughly under two categories viz. emotional and intellectual. While St. Teresa, St. Catherine, Meera

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1. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P. 132

are the examples of the first category, Eckhart, Sankara etc., belong to the second one.

The mystic looks at the world with a new light and discovers its reality, and lives a true life. "The mystic lives in the full light of vision. What others deemly seek, he knows with a knowledge, beside which all other knowledge is ignorance"[1] says Bertand Russel, the great mathematician and philosopher.

Centuries ago, the Upaniṣads divided knowledge into two categories viz. lower and the highest. All the knowledge of the world right from the Vedas to every branch of learning come under the first category, whereas the knowledge of the Reality (Brahman) is the highest one[2]. The lower knowledge may be and indeed is beneficial but is insufficient and incomplete without the highest knowledge. The subject is being discussed with a little detail in the forthcoming chapters.

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1. Russel: Mysticism and Logic and other Essays, P. 10
2. द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म यद् ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति परा चैवापरा च। (Mnd. Up, 1.1.4)

2

Brahman: The Goal of Mystics

The Upaniṣads are the earliest literature of mysticism not only of India but also of the whole world. They are vivacious with the highest mystic truths and experiences that man could ever achieve. All aspects of mysticism find ample expression in the Upaniṣads.

The highest Reality, which is the goal of every mystic is named Brahman in the Upaniṣads. It is the seamless unity behind every diversity, yet transcendental to all. It is the one and only reality without a second, unchanging, indestructible and inscrutable. Yet, from It originates the universe; is sustained and dissolved in it[1].

The Two Aspects

To make the paradox convincible, Brahman, the inscrutable, has been viewed from two aspects and named accordingly. "The Brahman has two forms", says the Upaniṣad, "the manifest and unmanifest"[2], "the Para and Apara"[3]. In the later Vedantic literature, more appealing words viz. Nirguṇa and Saguṇa were substituted for them, which will be followed in the present discussion.

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1. जन्माद्यस्य यतः। (B.S. 1.2)
2. द्वे वाव ब्रह्मणो रूपे मूर्त्तं चैवामूर्तं च (Br. Up. 2.3.1, Maitrāyanī UP. 5.3)
3. Maitrāyanī, UP 5.5

Nirguṇa Brahman

Brahman is beyond all qualifying attributes and surpasses all adjuncts. It cannot be described or expressed through positive definitions, since every positive affirmation pre-supposes a negation. The only way, therefore, is to negate positive qualities in Brahman. Thus, being above all descriptive, attributive qualities, Brahman has been named Nirguṇa. The Upaniṣads resort to the technique of negation to indicate It[1].

To emphasise that Brahman is beyond all descriptions, a beautiful story is narrated by Sankara: "When asked by Bāskalin, the disciple, to teach about Brahman, the preceptor remained silent. When questioned twice, thrice, he replied that he was describing Brahman by keeping silent. Brahman has no better expression than silence"[2]. Sense organs have limited capabilities of perceptions and expressions, which prove utterly scanty to comprehend the incomprehensible Brahman, let alone express It. Words do not suffice to describe It, mind to comprehend and eyes to visualise, ears to hear, tongue to taste, and skin to touch[3]. Brahman, in fact is the knowledge behind every knowledge. The sensories, who have specific powers to receive knowledge of their respective objects are reduced to insentient tools without Brahman. Brahman is the real knower. Brahman is pure consciousness[4]. It is the truth, the knowledge, and the endless[5].

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1. स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा (Br. Up, 4.4.22)
2. ब्रूमः खलु त्वं तु न विजानासि। उपशान्तोऽयमात्मा (B.S.S.B, 3.2.17)
3. न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग् गच्छति नो मनः (Kn. Up, 1.3)
4. प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म (At. Up, 3.1.3)
5. सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म (T.Up, 2.1.1)

Brahman, according to the Upaniṣads, is birthless and imperishable. It has neither beginning nor end. It never decays, is unattached and feels no pain[1].

Brahman is neither gross, nor small, is devoid of colours. It is neither shadow nor darkness. It is none of the five elements i.e. ether, air, water, light or earth. It cannot be received by the organ of smell since It has no flavour. It is devoid of organs like eyes, ears, nose tongue or skin. It is non-luminous. It has neither mind nor vital force. It is immeasurable. It has neither interior nor exterior. It is devoid of natural instincts like hunger and thirst. Neither can It satisfy anybody's hunger due to Its undevourability[2].

Brahman, according to Upaniṣads is one without a second[3]. It is the only entity and no other entity ever existed nor will exist. When asked by the son, Uddālaka explains that just as in different earthenwares nothing except earth is real, just as gold is real in various golden ornaments, so also Brahman is real in the diversity of the world that we perceive. The phenomenal diversity, according to the Upaniṣads is nothing except name and form[4].

While trying to define the indefinable Brahman, Yama the god of death depicts It as something which is not heard of by many. Many out of those who have heard

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1. अनाद्यनन्तं महत: परं ध्रुवं (Kth.Up, 1.3.15)
   अगृह्यो न हि गृह्यतेऽशीर्यो न हि शीर्यतेऽसङ्गो न हि सज्यतेऽसितो न व्यथते न रिष्यति (Br. Up, 4.4.22)
2. Br. Up. 3.8.8.
3. एकमेवाद्वितीयम् (Ch. Up, 6.2.1)
4. यथा सोम्यैकेन लोहमणिना सर्वं लोहमयं विज्ञातं स्याद् वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयं लोहमित्येव सत्यम् (Ch. Up., 6.1.5)

It have not known It. Hence, wonderful is the person who knows It and teaches about It and efficient is the person who is taught and who understands It[1]. Kaṭha further asserts that there is nothing after (or better) than Puraṣa. It is the ultimate entity. It is the last resort[2].

Brahman is different from both Dharma and Adharma. Dharma is the ideal moral behaviour of being, which causes peaceful existence of the universe. Brahman, may not be confused to be identical with this principle. It is different from that which is done and which is not done; that which has happened and which would happen. Brahman is immutable or is devoid of all changes. Change is a trait of perishables and Brahman is not perishable. It does not die with the death of the body. It is different from cause and effect, is different from past and future[3]. Brahman is devoid of the qualities of the five elements. It has no sound, which is the quality of ether, no touchability, which is the quality of air, no figure, the quality of fire, no taste, the quality of water and no smell, which is the property of earth[4].

Brahman is non-body in all bodies, is the only static principle among changing ones. It cannot be achieved by mere listening to the lectures of a teacher, nor by a sharp

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1. श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः
   श्रृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः।
   आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा
   श्चर्यो ज्ञाता कुशलानुशिष्टः।। (Kth. Up, 1.2.7)
2. पुरुषान्न परं किंचित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः (Kth. Up., 1.3.11)
3. अन्यत्र धर्मादन्यत्राधर्मादन्यत्रास्मात्कृताकृतात् अन्यत्र भूताच्च भव्याच्च (Kth. Up., 1.2.14)
4. अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं तथारसं नित्यमगन्धवच्च (Kth.Up., 1.3.15)

intelligence or the wisdom derived from listening to authentic people or scriptures[1].

Brahman is said to be farther than the farthest, yet nearest of the near. It is the greatest and yet the subtlest being. It is not easily available by him who does not aspire to do so. But for a person, who strives to attain It, finds It in his own heart[2]. Elsewhere, Brahman is depicted as Durdarśa or hard to be noticed, although is concealed in the hearts of individuals[3].

Brahman is never born from anything. Nothing is born out of It. It never dies, not even when the body dies. It never kills and is never killed[4].

Brahman, very significantly has been named fearlessness (Abhayam)[5]. Fear has to be caused by an external agent. Since Brahman is one without a second, fear ceases to exit.

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1. अशरीरं शरीरेष्वनवस्थेष्ववस्थितम् (Kth.Up, 1.2.22)
   नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन (Kth.Up., 1.2.23)
2. बृहच्च तद् दिव्यमचिन्त्यरूपं
   सूक्ष्माच्च तत् सूक्ष्मतरं विभाति
   दूरात् सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च
   पश्यत्स्विहैव निहितं गुहायाम् (Mnd.Up., 3.1.7)
3. तं दुर्दर्शं गूढ़मनुप्रविष्टं गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं (Kth.Up., 1.2.12)
4. न जायते म्रियते वा विपश्चि
   न्नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित्
   अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो
   न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे।। (Kth.Up., 1.2.18)
5. ब्रह्माभयं वै (Br. Up., 4.4.25)

Brahman never becomes greater or superior by good conduct, or inferior by bad conduct[1]. It is not affected by good or bad actions[2].

Brahman is self-sufficient, which needs no support for its erection. When asked on which is Brahman established, the master replies "on Its own greatness or may not even that"[3]. The reply is pregnant with deep significance. Brahman, as is one and without a second, needs nothing for Its support not even its own greatness, for It is the support Itself.

That Brahman is different from every phenomenon is explicit from the elaboration of the four quarters of Brahman, introduced in Māṇḍūkya. Brahman has four quarters viz. the waking, dream, deep sleep and the fourth with none of the qualities of the earlier ones. The fourth is the incomprehensible Brahman. It has no outer cognition or inner cognition, neither has the cognition of both of them. It is neither cognitive, nor incognitive. It is not seen, unable to be accepted, has no marks to distinguish, unthinkable, unnameable, that into which the world is withdrawn, quiet and benign[4]. It has no inside and no outside. It has no breath, no mind, and no vital force.

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1. स न साधुना कर्मणा भूयान्नो एवासाधुना कनीयान्। (Br.Up. 4.4.22)
2. नैनं कृताकृते तपतः (Br.Up., 4.4.22)
3. स्वे महिम्नि यदि वा न महिम्नीति (Ch.Up., 7.24.1)
4. नान्तःप्रज्ञं न बहिष्प्रज्ञं नोभयतःप्रज्ञं न प्रज्ञानघनं न प्रज्ञं नाप्रज्ञम्। अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते (Mdk.Up., 7)

Gender, the corporeal quality does not belong to the incorporeal Brahman. It is neither a woman, nor a man, nor impotent[1].

Brahman is the one and the only reality, without a second. The vision of variety in the non-dual entity is due to ignorance, which causes bondage resulting in repeated births and deaths in this world. He, who sees many is destined to rotate in the cycle of birth and death. He moves from one death to another[2].

Brahman is blemishless and without parts or differences[3]. In fact It is beyond the three kinds of differences (भेद) viz. differences within Itself (स्वगत), difference from other units of the same category (सजातीय) or difference from a separate category (विजातीय). The three differences have been depicted as:

"वृक्षस्य स्वगतो भेदः पत्रपुष्पफलादिभिः।
वृक्षान्तरात्सजातीयो विजातीयः शिलादितः।।"[4]

Brahman is devoid of all the three categories of differences, since there is no other entity than Brahman and Brahman is bodiless and is devoid of the qualities, which a gross body possesses. It is woundless and without sinews. It is untouched by sin[5].

Brahman is devoid of organic activities besides being beyond space and time. It never sees through Its eyes,

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1. नैव स्त्री न पुमानेष न चैवायं नपुंसकः (Sv.Up., 5.10)
2. मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति य इह नानेव पश्यति। (Kth.Up., 2.1.10)
3. ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्वस्ततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमानः। (Mnd.Up., 3.1.8)
4. P.D., 2.20
5. स पर्यगाच्छुक्रमकायमव्रणमस्नाविरं शुद्धमपापविद्धम्। (Is.Up., 8)

never hears through Its ears, never speaks through the organ of speech, never thinks through the mind, never lives through the vital force (प्राण). The eyes, the ears, the speech, the mind and the vital force derive their respective capabilities from It[1].

Brahman is not an object of knowledge. To express the unknowability of Brahman, there occurs an excellent verse in the Kena Upanisad which speaks, "He who thinks he knows Brahman really knows not and he who knows that he does not, in fact knows It"[2] It has a deep meaning beneath its surfacial contradictions. Since the complete knowledge of Brahman is an impossibility, he who thinks he knows Brahman has either a wrong or insufficient knowledge. Therefore, he does not know Brahman. But he, who knows that he is unable to comprehend Brahman knows the true nature of Brahman, i.e. unknowability. Says Eckhart, "Had I a God, whom I could understand, I would no longer hold him for God"[3]. Brahman is also inexpressible by any method. An effective expression is found with Plato about the inexpressibility of the Ultimate Reality:

"To find the father and maker of this universe is a hard task; and when you have found Him, it is impossible to speak of Him before all people"[4].

The unknowability of the Ultimate Reality has also been realised by Dionysius, the Aeropagite in the following words:

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1. Kn. Up., 1.1.4-8.
2. Kn. Up. 2.3
3. Otto : Mysticism; East and West., P.25.
4. Qt. Radhadrishnan : Principal Upaniṣads., P.19.

"And if anyone who sees God, recognises and understands what he sees, then, he himself has not seen him"[1].

Brahman is incomprehensible by reasoning. That Brahman cannot be understood through arguments of logic has been nicely depicted in one of the beautiful stories of Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Gārgī asks Yājñavalkya, ''Since all in the world is woven in water, where is water woven?''. Yājñavalkya replies, ''It is air in which water is woven''. Again being asked where air is woven he replies, ''it is sky''. Likewise he goes on replying to Gārgī that sky is woven in the world of Gandharva that is in the world of sun, that is in the world of moon, that in the world of gods, that in the world of Indra, that in the world of Prajāpati, which is woven to the world of Brahmā. When asked where the Brahmaloka is woven, he checks and warns Gārgī not to ask too many questions lest her head falls down. The entity, which cannot be known by argument, should not be asked for logical inference[2]. It is not perceivable by the mind or any other organs, is inexpressible by words, says the Upaniṣ ad. The only way to know Brahman is to rely on the words of the great seers who have realised It through their own experience[3].

The unknowability and imperceptibility of Brahman causes sceptic ideas about Its existence in the minds of a few critics. It becomes impossible to imagine the existence of some entity, which cannot be seen, can not be heard or can not be felt with the help of one's expert sensories.

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1. Qt. Radhakrishnan : The Principal Upaniṣads. P.586.
2. स होवाच गार्गि मातिप्राक्षीर्मा ते मूर्धा व्यपप्तदनतिप्रश्न्यां वै देवतामतिपृच्छसि गार्गि मातिप्राक्षीरिति। (Br.Up., 3.6.1)
3. अस्तीति ब्रुवतोऽन्यत्र कथं तदुपलभ्यते। (Kth.Up., 2.3.12)

The act of knowing needs three components, viz. the knower, the knowledge and the known. Brahman being all the three, there is no possibility of Its being known to any other agent. Due to non-availability of another knower, Brahman is beyond knowledge. Just as sweet things, like sugar etc. sweeten other edibles but are never sweetened by others, so also Brahman is the knower but is never an object of knowledge[1]. Brahman is inscrutable, not non-existent, because so vouch the scriptures[2].

In fact, the very act of denying the existence of Brahman, pre-supposes its very presence, just as to say "I have no tongue" pre-supposes the existence of one's tongue. So also, he who feels Brahman to be non-existent has to be non-existent at first, since Brahman is nothing other than his own self[3].

Having failed to understand the deep significance of the negative definitions, some western scholars have misunderstood the attibutelessness of the Nirguṇa Brahman. Caird therefore describes the Indian Brahman to be an "abyss of a negative infinitude ... a unity which has no principle of order in the manifold differences of things but merely a gulf in which all difference was lost[4]. Pfleiderer mistakes Brahman as "an indeterminate abstract Being, which is hardly distinguished from nothing; an

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1. स्वयमेवानुभूतित्वाद् विद्यते नानुभाव्यता।
ज्ञातृज्ञानान्तराभावादज्ञेयो न त्वसत्तया।। (P.D., 3.13)
2. शास्त्रयोनित्वात्, (B.S., 1.1.3)
3. जिह्वा मेऽस्ति न वेत्युक्तिर्लज्जायै केवलं यथा।
न बुध्यते मया बोधो बोद्धव्य इति तादृशी।। (P.D., 3.20,)
असद्ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद स्वयमेव भवेदसत्। अतोऽस्य मा भूद्वेद्यत्वं स्वसत्त्वं त्वभ्युपेयताम्।। (P.D., 3.25)
4. Qt. Mukhopadhyaya : Studies in the Upaniṣads. P.61.

abyss which produces and maintains the finite; it is like the cave of a lion into which all the footsteps lead and none lead out again"[1].

But Rudolf Otto gives an appropriate reply to repel such misgivings. Says he, "The aspiration for the void and for becoming nothing, must seem a kind of lunacy to any one who has no inner sympathy for the esoteric language and ideograms of Mysticism and lacks the matrix from which these come necessarily to birth... But, in fact, the void of the Eastern, like the nothing of the Western mystic is a numinous ideogram of the wholly other"[2].

William James makes it clearer: "The Ātman, is to be described by "No, No! Only" say the Upaniṣads - though it seems, on the surface, to be a no function is a denial made on behalf of a deeper yes ... we deny the 'this' negating, the negation which it seems to us to imply in the interest of the higher affirmative attitude"[3].

Saguṇa Brahman

Brahman, as has been discussed is inscrutable and beyond all description. To make It comprehensible to the limited purview of the mind, It is attributed with qualities, by visioning It from various limited and partial points of view. The unqualified, thus becomes qualified, the attributeless becomes attributed, and the Nirguṇa becomes Saguṇa. There is no need to describe It in a negative way. The Upaniṣads have numerous detailed and nicely depicted descriptions of It.

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1. Ibid.
2. Otto: The Idea of the Holy. P.30.
3. Varieties of Religious Experience. P.416.

Brahman is the wise (विपश्चित्)[1], eternal and ancient. It is subtler than the subtlest and larger than the largest. It can flee around while sitting or even sleeping[2]. It resides in all the bodies although It is bodiless. It is great and all pervading (विभु). If the body can be compared to a chariot, with the senses as its horses, the mind its reins and the intellect its driver, then the Ātman can be compared with the person seated on the chariot. It is dynamic as well as static. It is near everybody and yet away from them (due to their ignorance). It is inside everything and everybody yet, outside everything and everybody. It is omniscient, and self-existent. It apportions duties to the eternal years[3]. From It rises the sun and returns back[4].

Brahman has been depicted as the creator of the world. In the beginning, no other principle but the only Brahman was there. It was the only and without a second[5]. It, wishing to be many, created the light, light created water, water created food[6].

Creation involves creator and the material. How possibly could Brahman have created the world when nothing else was there? The Upaniṣad very efficiently replies to the question by the help of analogy. According to Muṇḍaka, Brahman, the immutable one created the

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1. न जायते म्रियते वा विपशचिन्नायं कुतश्चिन्न बभूव कश्चित्।
   अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो..... (Kth.Up., 1.2.18)
2. आसीनो दूरं व्रजति शयानो याति सर्वतः। (Kth.Up., 1.2.21)
3. कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः। (Is.Up., 8)
4. यतश्चोदेति सूर्योऽस्तं यत्र च गच्छति। (Kth.Up., 2.1.9)
5. एकमेवाद्वितीयम्। (Ch.Up., 6.2.1)
6. तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति तत्तेजोऽसृजत। तत्तेज ऐक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति तदपोऽसृजत। (Ch.Up., 6.2.3)

world just like a spider creates the cobweb, just like herbs grow from the earth, just as hair in the head and body grow on a living man[1].

According to Muṇḍaka, austerity (तपस्) made Brahman expand. From the expanded Brahman, food was created. From food, vital force, mind, truth (or the five elements[2], that are real) the worlds, the rituals and the immortality came into being[3]. He is the generator of the great cosmic mind Hiraṇyagarbha[4].

To make the process of creation clearer, it is compared with the burning fire and the various beings of the universe have the analogy of the sparks of it. From Brahman, fire, rains herbs and other creatures are born. The Vedas, the rites of initiation, the sacrifices etc. also are born out of the Brahman. All the gods, the celestials, men, animals, birds, the activities like respiration, qualities like austerity, chastity, faith, truth etc. are born out of the Brahman. From the Brahman are also born the seven vital forces, the seven flames, the seven oblations, the seven Lokas.[5].

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1. यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति।
   यथा सतः पुरुषात् केशलोमानि तथाक्षरात् सम्भवतीह विश्वम्।। (Mnd.Up., 1.1.7)
2. Radhakrishnan translates Satyam as the real or the five elements (The Principal Upaniṣads. P.673).
3. तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते।
   अन्नात् प्राणो मनः सत्यं लोका कर्मसु चामृतम्।। (Mnd.Up., 1.1.8)
4. हिरण्यगर्भं जनयामास पूर्वम्। (Sv.Up., 3.4)
5. सप्त प्राणाः प्रभवन्ति तस्मात् सप्तार्चिषः समिधः सप्त होमाः।
   सप्त इमे लोका येषु चरन्ति प्राणा गुहाशया निहिताः सप्त सप्त।। (Mnd.Up., 2.1.8)

There is a wide difference between scholars on the point whether the creation is really something new or not. Many scholars think that the creation, as it seems from the Upaniṣad, is a real activity and that the Brahman really created the world out of Itself. But Sankara, the exponent of Advaita school strongly feels that the world is an unreal creation just as golden ornament is an unreal creation from gold. When a mass of gold gets the form of a necklace, it may be called a new creation because of its form and name; but the gold, which is the reality, remains unchanged, so also the manifest world is nothing but Brahman Itself. The variety rests on the names and forms. Aurobindo clarifies the concept like this:

"Creation is not a making of something out of nothing or of one thing out of another but a self-projection of Brahman into the conditions of space and time. Creation is not a making but a becoming in terms and forms of conscious existence"[1].

Brahman has the unique attribute of being loved. In fact. It is the entity in beings that attracts love. Yājñavalkya, while imparting the knowledge of Brahman asseverates "The husband or the wife is not loved because he or she is coveted, but it is the desire of Ātman, due to which the wife is loved. Likewise, son is not loved for the desire of the son, but he is loved for the desire of the Ātman in him. So also, brahmins, warriors, the worlds, the gods, the beings, and the wealth, all are loved because the Ātman in them is loved[2]". Brahman is the source of

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1. Aurobindo : Iśa Upaniṣad., P.39.
2. न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति। न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवत्यात्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति। न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्त्यात्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति।। (Br.Up., 2.4.5)

joy[1] (रस) in everything joyous. Rasa is the delight that is derived from the sweet, sour things, enjoyed.

Consciousness, present in all its forms is Brahman[2]. It is the mind (मनस्), heart (हृदयम्), the sentience (सज्ञानम्), perception (ज्ञानम्), discrimination (विज्ञानम्), intelligence (प्रज्ञानम्), wisdom (मेधा), insight (दृष्टिः), fortitude (धृतिः), thinking (मतिः), genius (मनीषा), impulse (द्युतिः), memory (स्मृतिः), resolution (संकल्पः), purpose (क्रतुः), life (असुः), desire (कामः) and control (वशः)[3]. In a nutshell, Brahman is consciousness as a whole and every part of the mental function, that is present anywhere in the universe. In fact, consciousness is the pivot around which the whole universe revolves. Consciousness is the very base of the universe, which is Brahman[4].

Brahman, as discussed earlier, is beyond perception of eyes, ears, skin and other sensories. The organs have certain specific qualities to receive the knowledge of their respective objects. Without the power, they are reduced to insentient tools. In fact, the knower, who actually sees, feels, tastes or touches is not the sense organ but Brahman. It is the real seer, the real hearer, the thinker, the knower, not side by side with other agents but is the only one seer, and so on[5]. "It is the eye of the eye, ear of the ear, mind of the mind, speech of the speech, breath

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1. रसो वै सः। (T.Up., 2.7.1)
2. At. Up. 3.1.2.
3. Ibid.
4. प्रज्ञाने प्रतिष्ठितं प्रज्ञानेत्रो लोकः प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठा प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म। (At.Up., 3.1.3)
5. अदृष्टं द्रष्ट्रश्रुतं श्रोत्रमतं मन्त्रविज्ञातं विज्ञातृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति द्रष्टृनान्यदतोऽस्ति श्रोतृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति मन्तृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति विज्ञातृ। (Br.Up., 3.8,11)

of the breath,'' states the Kena Upaniṣad[1] to make it more apprehensible. It is the power behind all powerful. There goes a nice story for the effective illustration of this:

"Once, after the victory over demons, the gods, conceited over their splendid success, started glorifying themselves. Suddenly a Yakṣa appeared before them, whom they failed to recognise. Fire was asked to know his identity, who hastened without delay. Asked who he was, by the Yakṣa, he answered he was Jātaveda who could burn everything whatever there was in the earth. The Yakṣa threw a blade of grass in front of him and asked to burn it. With all his power, fire could not burn it and returned back to the gods and confessed his inability. Then went air who was proud of his power to blow off everything in the world. A blade of grass was given to him to blow off. He failed to do so, and returned back to his place confessing his inability to know the identity of the Yakṣa. Then Indra, who was the king of gods and was supposed to see (know) everything everywhere, was asked to know and reveal the identity of the Yakṣa. By the time Indra reached there, the Yakṣa vanished away. Indra, with all his power of omniscience failed to locate him. Suddenly Umā, the goddess appeared in the sky, who revealed the identity of the Yakṣa as Brahman, who was the power behind all powerful. It was in fact the victory of Brahman which the gods were celebrating"[2].

Brahman is thus the power behind everything that is powerful. It is the power of burning in fire, it is the power of blowing off in air, and it is the power of

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1. श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद्वचो ह वाचं स उ. प्राणस्य प्राण चक्षुषश्चक्षुः। (Kn.Up., 1.2)
2. Kn.Up., 3.1-4.1

omniscience in Indra and so on. With the power of Brahman the eyes see, the tongue speaks, the ears hear, the mind thinks and the Prāṇa thrives[1].

Brahman, the lord of the universe, is the mighty ruler under whose administration functions the Nature. The sun, the earth, the sky and the moon occupy their respective places, the time divided into moments, hours, days, nights, fortnights, months seasons and years, rolls on without deviation, the rivers flow from the mountains to the oceans without willfully altering their directions. The natural law is nothing but the administration of the mighty Brahman[2]. The natural forces (otherwise called gods) do their stipulated duties out of the fear of the ruler Brahman. The sun and fire burn (remain hot) due to Its fear. The air blows, the rain-god rains and the death kills[3] only because of the dread of their king, who is ever ready with dreadful weapon raised to punish the transgressor[4].

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1. येन वागभ्युद्यते, (Kn.Up., 1.4) येनाहुर्मनो मतम्, (Kn.Up., 1.5) येन चक्षूंषि पश्यति, (Kn.Up., 1.6) येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम्, (Kn.Up., 1.7) येन प्राण: प्रणीयते, (Kn.Up., 1.8)
2. एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गि सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ विधृतौ तिष्ठत:..... द्याव्यापृथिव्यौ विधृते तिष्ठत:..... निमेषा मुहूर्ता अहोरात्राण्यर्धमासा मासा ऋतव: संवत्सरा इति विधृतास्तिष्ठन्ति..... नद्य: स्यन्दन्ते.....। (Br.Up., 3.8.9)
3. भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भयात्तपति सूर्य:। भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चम:। (Kth.Up., 2.3.3)
   भीषास्माद्वात: पवते। भीषोदेति सूर्य:। भीषास्मादग्निश्चेन्द्रश्च। मृत्युर्धावति पञ्चम:। (T.Up., 2.8.1)
4. महद्भयं वज्रमुद्यतम्। (Kth.Up., 2.3.2)

Brahman is the controller of all (सर्वस्य वशी) the lord of all (सर्वस्येशान:), ruler (भूताधिपति:) and the protector of all beings (भूतपाल:)[1].

Brahman, according to the Upaniṣads, is self-effulgent. It Itself is the light and needs no other light to illuminate It. It is the light of lights. It is in fact the light, which illumines others. The sun, the moon, the fire and all the other sources of lights are humble borrowers of Its illumination[2]. Whereas Upanisads call It light, Christianity prefers to call It darkness. Dionysius may be quoted:

"God's all-pervading darkness is hidden from every light and veils all recognition"[3].

Brahman is pure, omniscient, self-existent, and the ruler of the mind. It is the seer of past, present and the future. It is the distributor of duties to the competent ones since time immemorial.

Brahman is the material and efficient cause of the world. It is immanent in the world like a lump of salt melted in the water pervading every drop of it[4].

According to Muṇḍaka, fire is Its head, the sun and moon Its eyes, the regions of space Its ears, the Vedas are Its speech, and air is Its vital force[5]. The Gītā elaborates this idea of universal vision (Viśvarūpadarśan) when Lord

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1. Br. Up. 4.4.22.
2. आवि: - (Mnd.Up., 2.2.1) अर्चिमत् - (Mnd.Up., 2.2.2)
3. Qt. Radhakrishnan : The Principal Upaniṣads. P.586.
4. Ch. Up. 6.12-13.
5. अग्निर्मूर्धा चक्षुषी चन्द्रसूर्यौ दिश: श्रोत्रे वाग्विवृताश्च वेदा:।
   वायु: प्राणो हृदयं विश्वमस्य पद्भ्यां पृथिवी ह्येष सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा।।
   (Mnd.Up., 2.1.4)

Kṛṣṇa exposed his actual figures to Arjuna[1]. "Its eyes are all over the world," says the Upaniṣad, "Its mouth everywhere, hand and feet all around[2]". It alone engulfs the whole universe. To illustrate the immanence of Brahman in the world, there goes a nice narration in the Upaniṣad:

"When, in the beginning, there was nothing but Brahman, It created the world, and wished to indwell it since it was impossible for the world to survive without Brahman. In searching a suitable entry, It found the organ of speech busy in utterance, eyes with viewing, ears with hearing, skin in touching, mind in thinking, Apāna in pressing down, procreative organ in ejecting. At last, It entered into the human body by cleaving the centre of the head, As a result, the centre of the head is called Vidṛti"[3].

The whole world, wherever there is life, is wrapped with the Lord[4]. All the gods viz. Brahmā, Indra, Prajāpati and others, the five elements (air, water, ether, light and earth), all the creatures, be it big or small, be it born from womb, egg, sweat or sprout from a seed are but Brahman[5]. The huge wide world is nothing but Brahman[6]. It is Brahman in the right, in the left, in the front, behind, above, and below. It is extended to every part of the world[7].

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1. अनेकवाहूदरवक्त्रनेत्रं पश्यामि त्वां सर्वतोऽनन्तरूपम्। (Gītā, 11.16)
75. Sv. UP, 3.3
3. At. Up. 1.3.12.
4. ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किं च जगत्यां जगत्। (Is.Up., 1)
5. At. Up. 3.1.3.
6. ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम्। (Mnd.Up., 2.2.11)
7. ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म पश्चाद् ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण। (Mnd.Up., 2.2.11)

Brahman indwells and is within each and every phenomenon of the universe. It is in the earth, the earth having no knowledge of it. It is in the water, in the fire, in the sky, in the air, in the heaven, in quarters, in the moon and the stars. It equally indwells the darkness and the light. Brahman indwells all the beings, the latter comprising Its body[1].

Although pervaded in each and every part of the universe, Brahman is not exhausted in it, but measures much surplus to it. The great Puruṣa, says the Ṛgveda, who has thousands of heads, eyes and feet, pervades the whole universe and is yet surplus by ten fingers[2]. Just as fire enters into fuel to burn it, just as air enters into every form (or space) and is still surplus to remain outside it, so also Brahman indwells every being and is still outside[3]. It is in everything and out of everything[4].

Brahman has been conferred with the mysteriously significant name Tajjalān[5]. The four parts that Tajjalān is comprised of (tat, ja, la, an) stand to mean "from that (tat) Brahman the universe arises (ja) in It, it remains (an) and to It the universe disappears (la). Brahman according Taittirīya, is that entity, from which the living beings are born, do survive and extinguish[6]. Brahman is the cause of everything[7].

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1. Br. Up. 3.7.3-23.
2. सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात्।
   स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वाऽत्यतिष्ठद्दशाङ्गुलम्।। (Ṛgveda, 10.90.1)
3. Kth. Up. 2.2.10.
4. तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः।। (Is.Up., 5)
5. तज्जलानिति शान्त उपासीत। (Ch.Up., 3.14.1)
6. यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते। (T.Up., 3.1.1)
7. तद्भूतयोनिम्। (Mnd.Up., 1.1.6)

The universe is comparable to a banyan tree whose roots grow upwards and branches downwards and whose seed is the Brahman[1]. To make this truth clearer, the son disciple Śvetaketu is asked to bring a fruit of the banyan tree and break. When broken, small seeds are seen. When the seeds are broken, nothing is seen inside. The cause of the gigantic banyan tree (he is explained by the father) with its trunk, branches, leaves flowers and fruits lies in the smallest particle not noticeable to the normal eyes. So also the cause of the wide universe with all its diversities has its cause in the Brahman,[2] which is smaller than the smallest[3]. It is the atom, the immortal[4].

Alongside being the tiniest of the tiny, Brahman is the grandest, the superior-most and is larger than the largest[5]. In the series of superiority, the objects of sense organs stand superior to the sensories, and mind to the objects. The intellect is still superior to the mind and the Prakṛti is superior to the intellect. But Brahman is superior to the Prakṛti too. Thus, Brahman is superior to all. There is nothing superior to Brahman. It is the greatest and the superiormost[6].

Brahman is the indwelling director who inhabits everything and regulates them from within, although they have no knowledge of it. Indwelling the earth and water It rules them from within. Brahman, likewise, inhabits the fire, the sky, the air, the heaven, the quarters, the moon,

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1. ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाखः एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः। (Kth.Up., 2.3.1)
2. Ch. Up. 6.12.1-3.
3. अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान्। (Kth.Up., 1.2.20)
4. तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते। (Kth.Up., 2.2.8)
5. महतो महीयान्। (Kth.Up., 1.2.20)
6. पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः। (Kth.Up., 1.3.11)

the stars, the ether, the darkness, the lights, all beings, the vital force, the speech, the eyes, the mind, the skin, the intellect and the semen. It is very much within them; It has all of these for Its body. It rules them from inside, without their knowledge[1].

Brahman is the underlying unity in the diversity of the universe. The earth is like honey to all the beings and all beings are like honey to the earth. The water, the fire, the air, the sun, the moon the quarters, the lightning, all are pleasant to the beings like honey. The beings are like honey to them too. The concealed principle that makes them appear pleasant to one another like honey is the Brahman. Because, Brahman is present in the sun, the moon, the quarters, the air, fire and also in the beings[2].

Brahman is like the pivot around which revolve the gods, the beings, the regions (Lokas), all the vital forces and everything - all are interwoven with It[3]. Brahman is the eater of food[4], although It Itself is the food[5]. Every thing enters into the all-devouring mouth of Brahman[6]. Brahman, in fact, is a great devourer, the eater of everything. "The Brahmins and the Kṣatriyas", exclaims the Upaniṣad, "are Its principal food and death itself is a supplementary diet"[7]. The kings the warriors, the

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1. Br. Up. 3.7.3-23
2. Br. Up. 2.5.1-14.
3. तद्यथा रथनाभौ च रथनेमौ चाराः सर्वे समर्पिता एवमेवास्मिन्नात्मनि सर्वाणि भूतानि सर्वे देवाः सर्वे लोकाः सर्वे प्राणाः सर्व एत आत्मानः समर्पिताः। (Br.Up., 2.5.15)
4. स वा एष महानज आत्मान्नादो....। (Br.Up., 4.4.24)
5. अन्नं ब्रह्मेति व्यजानात्। (T.Up., 3.2.1)
6. Gītā 11.27
7. यस्य ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च उभे भवत ओदनः। मृत्युर्यस्योपसेचनम्। (Kth.Up., 1.2.25)

common men, the regions, the universe, all rush to the dreadful, all devouring mouth of the cosmic figure like tiny insects rushing to a conflagration for extinction[1].

Although depicted as largest and vast, Brahman dwells in the hearts of beings[2]. It is invariably named as the dweller of the den (गुहाचर)[3]. Brahman is often said to be of the size of a thumb. It is also called a dwarf who rests between Apāna and Prāṇa, and is worshipped by all the gods[4].

It is Brahman again who is the donor of wealth (वसुदान:)[5]. Sankara takes (which seems logical) wealth to be the fruit of one's action, which is granted by Brahman[6].

Māyā

The concept of Māyā has a very significant role in the philosophy of Upaniṣads. To have a considerable understanding of the concept of Brahman, the understanding of Māyā is unavoidable, as much as, to understand light, a knowledge of darkness is unavoidable. Derived from the root Mā (to measure) it is accepted to

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1. Gītā. 11.26-29.
2. य एष अन्तर्हृदय आकाशस्तस्मिञ्छेते। (Br.Up., 4.4.22)
3. Mnd. Up 2.2.1, गुहाहितम्, (Kth. Up. 1.2.12)
4. अङ्गुष्ठमात्र: पुरुषो मध्य आत्मनि तिष्ठति। (Kth Up., 2.1.12)
   ऊर्ध्वं प्राणमुन्नयत्यपानं प्रत्यगस्यति।
   मध्ये वामनमासीनं विश्वेदेवा उपासते।। (Kth.Up., 2.2.3)
5. Br. Up. 4.4.24.
6. वसु धनं सर्वप्राणिकर्मफलं, तस्य दाता प्राणिनां यथाकर्म फलेन योजयिते त्यर्थ:।। (Br. Up. S.B. 4.4.24)

mean, "that which measures the immeasurable (Brahman)".

Brahman, as is explicit from the prior discussion is devoid of wills and activities. But paradoxically, it is also clear that the world was created by Brahman after It wanted to do so! To solve such an unsoluble puzzle, the great seers have presented the unique principle Māyā, by which the 'one' becomes (appears) many. Ṛgveda[1] for the first time uses the word Māyā with the very meaning, which is prevalent in the Upaniṣads and the subsequent Vedāntic philosophy. Māyā is described in the Upaniṣad as a golden cover, which obstructs the appearance of truth[2]. Brahman, which is the truth[3], does not appear in Its originality due to the presence of Māyā. On the contrary, the same Brahman, which is without a second appears as the motley world.

Indefinability of Māyā

A critic is always confronted with the problem of defining the principle Māyā. It is not existent because there is no other entity than Brahman. It is not non-existent, since the very creation rests upon the presence of it. Therefore it has been intelligently called indefinable (Anirvacanīya). Inspite of its unreality, the existence of Māyā can be inferred through its modifications (earth,

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1. इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते। (Rgveda, 6.47.18)
2. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्। (Is.UP,15)
3. सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म। (T.Up., 2.1.1)

water etc.), just as the power of fire is inferred from the work (of burning) it does[1].

Sankara describes the indefinability of Māyā as follows:

सन्नाप्यसन्नाप्युभयात्मिका नो
भिन्नाप्यभिन्नाप्युभयात्मिका नो।
साङ्गाप्यनङ्गाह्युभयात्मिका नो
महाद्भुतानिर्वचनीयरूपा।।[2].

(It is neither existent nor non-existent, nor both, neither different nor non-different, nor both, neither with parts nor without parts, nor both. It is the most wonderful and the most indefinable).

Māyā, most singularly, cannot be perceived with the help of knowledge. The moment it is understood it loses its identity just as darkness loses its entity when perceived with the help of a lamp[3]. In fact, it is the uniqueness of Māyā (or अविद्या) that it does not tolerate proof. When proved, it no longer exists.

Māyā is an instrument in the hands of the qualified (सगुण) Brahman, with the help of which It creates the world just like sorcery is used by the sorcerer to create a magical world. Māyā has no separate entity, just as the power of a powerful man is never regarded as separate. In fact, Māyā is the material cause of the yonder world. It is

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1. निस्तत्त्वा कार्यगम्यास्य शक्तिर्मायाग्निशक्तिवत्। (P.D., 2.47)
2. Vivekacūdāmaṇi. 109
3. अज्ञानं ज्ञातुमिच्छेद्यो ज्ञानेनात्यन्त मूढ़धी:।
   स तु नूनं तमः पश्येद् दीपेनोत्तमतेजसा।। (Vedānta Siddhānta Muktāvalī, P.255)

pervaded as the wide universe of which Iśvara (God) is the efficient cause. Says the Upaniṣad[1].

"मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम्"

Māyā and Avidyā

Just as forest is the collective name of trees, so also Māyā is the collective unity of individual Avidyās. In other words, the same principle, when it works with the Iśvara or the creator, is called Māyā, and when it works with the individual Jīva or the creature is called Avidyā.

Māyā is constituted of three Guṇas viz Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The same principle, when abundant with Tamas is called Avidyā and when it is abundant with Sattva, it is called Māyā.

Two Traits

The root cause, why the individual fails to perceive the Reality, and mistakes the world to be real lies with Māyā. The two spectacular traits of Māyā which are responsible for the puzzles are the qualities to veil and to distract[2]. Just as a mere speck of cloud, can deprive the vision of the sight of the sun, although the sun is million and million times larger than the cloud, so also, the Māyā (or Avidyā) covers up the sight of the individual jīva from

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1. Sv. Up. 4.10.
2. आच्छाद्य विक्षिपति संस्फुरदात्मरूपं जीवेश्वरत्वजगदाकृतिभिर्मृषैव।
   अज्ञानमावरणविभ्रमशक्तियोगादात्मत्वमात्रविषयाश्रयत्वबलेन।। (Saṁkṣepa Śārirakam 1.20)

experiencing the real nature of Brahman[1]. It has been appropriately compared with a shining lid to cover up the appearance of the Reality[2]. The second trait, which is of the nature of distracting the mind from the Reality to unreality makes the individual jīva mistake the world to be real. Just as at times nacre is mistaken as silver or a pillar is mistaken as a person, or a rope is mistaken as a serpent, due to some reason or other, so also, the indivisible Brahman seems to be divided into thousands of parts due to this unique quality of Māyā. Beautifully has it been depicted in the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā that the birthless Self becomes differentiated only through Māyā and by no other means. Otherwise if the differentiation were true, the immortal Self would no longer be immortal[3].

The Three States

The divine Māyā, which is a blend of three Guṇas is difficult to be surpassed, avows the Gītā[4]. But, in order to realise Brahman, it is unavoidable to cross the Māyā. Therefore, as the aspirant proceeds on the lengthy way of realisation he confronts the three stages of Māyā.

In the initial stage, seen from a mundane viewpoint, Māyā seems to be real. It is called the Vāstavī or real stage of Māyā. When, after controlling his senses and mind, the aspirant sees it from a critical viewpoint, it seems sometimes real, sometimes unreal and sometimes neither of the both. This second stage is called indefinable

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1. आवरणशक्तिस्तावदल्पोऽपि
मेघोऽनेकयोजनायतमादित्यमण्डलमवलोकयितृनयनपथपिधायतकतया
यथाच्छादयतीव....। (Vēdanta Sāra, 16)
2. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्। (Is.Up., 15)
3. मायया भिद्यते ह्येतन्नान्यथाजं कथञ्चन। तत्त्वतो भिद्यमाने हि मर्त्यताममृतं व्रजेत्। (Mdk.K., 3.19)
4. दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया। (Gītā, 7.14)

(अनिर्वचनीय) stage of Māyā. When the aspirant reaches the goal and has the realisation of Brahman, he finds the Māyā. trashy (तुच्छा). It is the third stage of Māyā. Nicely has it been depicted in Pañcadaśī:[1].

"तुच्छाऽनिर्वचनीया च वास्तवी चेत्यसौ त्रिधा।

ज्ञेया माया त्रिभिर्बोधैः श्रौतयौक्तिकलौकिकै:।।"

Unfortunately, due to non-frequent use of the very word Māyā in the Upaniṣads critics have found ample opportunity to feel that Māyā was a novel invention of Sankara, and that it was absolutely unknown to the Upanisadic thinkers. Scholars like Jacob have proceeded a step forward to imagine that it was a borrowing from Sāṁkhya by Sankara[2]. He says- "This idea seems to have been borrowed from the Sāṁkhya system since the time of Sankara. It occurs nowhere in the Brahma Sutra as a tenet of the Vedānta."

But, it may be stated without insolence to the critics that, neither the word nor the idea was unfamiliar to the Upaniṣads. The word Māyā finds place in the Ṛgveda[3], and the same has received mentions in the Upaniṣads[4], although not frequently, and is no way grafted to the school of Vedānta later on. The Chāndogya explicitly mentions about the three Guṇas and holds that the world is made up of the three Guṇas.[5]

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1. P.D., 6.130
2. Qt. Srivastava: Vedāntasāra, Tattvapārijāta. P.73.
3. इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते। (Ṛgveda, 6:47.18)
4. हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।। (Is.Up., 15)

   मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम्।

   तस्यावयवभूतैस्तु व्याप्तं सर्वमिदं जगत्।। (Sv.Up., 4.10)
5. Ch. Up. 6.4.1

The prayer to lead the aspirant from the non-real to the real, from the darkness to the light, from the mortality to the immortality[1] and the prayer to unveil the reality to the lover of truth[2] distinctly disclose that there is the presence of darkness, unreality and immortality (which is Māyā), alongside the truth, the real and the immortal. Later stalwarts of Vedānta have systematically presented this very idea. Moreover, it would be difficult, without the interference of Māyā, to justify how the Brahman which is non-active and motionless is described as the creator, sustainer, and ruler at the same time. Everything would look contradictory without the principle Māyā, which not only patches up all the chasms but also gives an appropriate explanation to all seemingly contradictory statements.

The Status of the World

As has been discussed earlier, the one and only reality, is the Brahman. A natural question arises, what, then is the status of the world? Is it unreal like a castle in the air or a mirage in the desert? Are the worldly duties useless then?

Although there is no categorical and distinct answer to such a question in the Upaniṣads, the later Vedānta, has very effectively removed this misgiving from the minds of the questioners. According to the Vedāntic views, there are three kinds of realities viz. The Prātibhāsika Sattā (phenomenal reality), the Vyāvahārika Sattā (empirical reality) and the Pāramārthika Sattā (transcendental reality).

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1. असतो मा सद्गमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय, मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय। (Br.Up., 1.3.28)
2. Is. Up. 15.

The first kind of reality is very short-living like dreams etc., which withers away with waking up. The third kind of reality is only Brahman, which is the one and the only reality, which was there and which will be there for all the time to come. The second kind of reality, which is Vyāvahārika or empirical, is a unique kind in itself. It is neither unreal like the dreams nor real like Brahman. It is real so long as the aspirant does not realise the reality of Brahman. When Brahman is realised, the world, which is real till then becomes unreal in the sense, it no more is seen as the world in its diversities but is realised as the manifestation of Brahman. Each and everything in the world appears as Brahman. A verse from the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad would be accurate to show how the sage finds Brahman in every living and inert being in the world:

"नील: पतङ्गो हरितो लोहिताक्षस्तड़ित्गर्भ ऋतव: समुद्रा:।
अनादिमत्त्वं विभुत्वेन वर्तसे[1]।।"

The liberated one, as is clear from above, finds Brahman in every animate and inanimate being, right from the tiny insects to the vast oceans not excluding temporal phenomena like seasons. By recognising the world as Brahman, the reality of the world loses its existence in the reality of Brahman, just as by recognising the rope as a rope, the reality of the unreal snake, which was imposed on it, loses its entity.

Īśvara and the Individual Soul

"Māyā, the wish-yielding cow has two calves called Jīva and Īśvara", says Vidyaranya, "who drink duality to

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1. Sv.Up., 4.4

their hearts' content, although the truth altogether is non-duality[1]".

The passage presents the clearest picture of the concept of Īśvara and the individual soul accepted in the Vedāntic system of philosophy. Both, Īśvara and Jīva are the unique products of the same principle, called Māyā or Avidyā. Consciousness (Brahman) reflected on Māyā or the cosmic ignorance is named Īśvara[2] and the same when reflected on the individual ignorance (Avidyā) is called Jīva[3]. Both, Īśvara and Jīva are like two birds with eternal friendship, residing on the same tree (of body) where the individual soul is destined to devour the fruits of it (the result of his actions) whereas Īśvara is not[4]. "Both of them, although indwell the hearts of beings", differentiates the Upaniṣad, "are different from each other like light and shadow[5]". One is the Lord, (Īśwara) the other is the helpless Jīva[6].

Īśvara is that aspect of the Reality (Brahman), which is seen in relation with the individual soul, and may be called the personal God of individual. Of the four quarters of reality, discussed earlier, the third quarter, whose place is dreamless sleep, which is a mass of consciousness, is called Prājña. It is abundant with bliss and enjoys bliss

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1. मायाख्याया: कामधेनोर्वत्सौ जीवेश्वरावुभौ।
   यथेच्छं पिवतां द्वैतं तत्त्वं त्वद्वैतमेव हि।। (P.D., 6.236)
2. सत्त्वशुद्ध्यविशुद्धिभ्यां मायाविद्ये च ते मते।
   मायाबिम्बो वशीकृत्य तां स्यात् सर्वज्ञ ईश्वर:।। (P.D., 1.16)
3. अविद्यावशगस्त्वन्य:.....। (P.D., 1.17)
4. Mnd. Up. 3.1.1.
5. छायातपौ ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति। (Kth.Up., 1.3.1)
6. अनीशया शोचति मुह्यमान:। (Mnd.Up., 3.1.2)

and only bliss[1]. When viewed from a cosmic point of view, it is the Īśvara. Brahman, when conditioned and attributed with powers is named Īśvara[2].

Īśvara has been referred to in the Upaniṣads by various names like, Maheśvara[3], Sarveśvara[4], Īśāna[5], Rudra[6]. He is described as golden-hued[7], a net-holder[8], the net being the Māyā, the Prakṛti[9].

With this efficient tool Māyā, Īśvara creates the world, the Vedas, the sacrifices, the rituals, the past and future (time)[10] and what not, He even generates the great progenitor Hiraṇyagarbha[11]. He is powerful with many powers[12]. Like a spider, He wove a net around Himself not because of any compulsion, but out of sport[13].

He is the Lord, the sustainer and the destroyer, beneficial, adorable and the great refuge of all. He, according to Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad, makes man perform

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1. प्रज्ञानघन एवानन्दमयो ह्यानन्दभुक्। (Mdk. Up., 5)
2. तच्छक्त्युपाधिसंयोगाद् ब्रह्मैवेश्वरतां ब्रजेत्। (P.D., 3.40)
3. Sv. Up. 4.10
4. Br. Up. 4.4.22.
5. Ibid.
6. Sv. Up. 4.12.
7. रुक्मवर्णम्। (Mnd. Up., 3.1.3)
8. जालवान्। (Sv. Up., 3.1)
9. मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं तु महेश्वरम्। (Sv. Up., 4.10)
10. छन्दांसि यज्ञाः क्रतवो व्रतानि भूतं भव्यं यच्च वेदा वदन्ति।
    यस्मान् मायी सृजते विश्वमेतत्।। (Sv. Up., 4.9)
11. हिरण्यगर्भं जनयामास पूर्वम् (Sv. Up., 3.4)
12. ईशत ईशनीभिः। (Sv.Up., 3.1)
13. यस्तन्तुनाभ इव तन्तुभिः प्रधानजैः स्वभावतो देव एकः स्वमावृणोत्।। (Sv.Up., 6.10)

righteous or heinous deeds[1]. He is the intelligence, the delight and is identified with the vital force[2].

In the Yoga system of philosophy, Īśvara has been conferred with a very special and unique rank. Although one among the numerous monads (Puruṣas), He is not destined to be touched by suffering (Kleśa), action (Karma) and results thereof (Vipāka)[3]. He is the supreme master, the master of the ancient seers, not bound by the limits of time[4] and is eternally liberated. He is expressed by the three-syllabled word "Om"[5] and helps in liberating him who repeats the same and meditates on Him simultaneously[6].

As for Jīva, it is the same Reality (Brahman), viewed from a different point, as the same person in the behavioural world, is identified as son, father and grand father by different persons[7]. It is like the many reflections of the same moon separately reflected on water contained in small places[8]. It is like the space confined in a jar imaginatively separated from the vast, all-pervasive space[9].

Jīva, being the product of Avidyā, is ignorant and identifies itself with a tiny entity, moved by the sorrow

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1. 3.8
2. स एष प्राण: एष प्रज्ञात्मा। (Ibid)
3. क्लेशकर्मविपाकाशयैरपरामृष्ट: पुरुषविशेष: ईश्वर:। (Y.S., 1.25)
4. पूर्वेषामपि गुरु: कालेनानवच्छेदात्। (Y.S., 1.26)
5. तस्य वाचक: प्रणव:। (Y.S., 1.27)
6. तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्। (Y.S., 1.28)
7. P.D. 3.41.
8. एकधा बहुधा चैव दृश्यते जलचन्द्रवत्। (Brahmavindūpaniṣad, 12)
9. आत्मा ह्याकाशवज्जीवैर्घटाकाशैरिवोदित:। (Mdk.K., 3.3)

and happiness of the world. Drowned in the worldliness, it feels helpless and is unhappy[1].

The individual soul, (although imaginary) is the tiniest part of the Brahman, comparable to the hundredth part of the end of a hair, after divided into hundred parts[2]. Brahman, which is neither female, nor male, nor impotent (as an individual soul) acquires the form of the body where it resides[3]. But it is totally unreal and an absolute delusion of a snake on a rope, because consciousness is indivisible and cannot be divided into that of the Jīva and Brahman[4]. Jīva, in fact, is a wrong knowledge superimposed on Brahman, like the knowledge of pot on earth, or that of silver on nacre[5].

When the individual soul, thus unhappy due to its own ignorance beholds the Īśvara, the Lord, the progenitor even of Brahmā, eternally residing with it, its knowledge aroused, it becomes wise. It shakes off both good and evil and is free from all stains[6]. All its bondages are untied, at the vision of Lord[7]. It attains the supreme equality with Brahman[8].

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1. अनीशया शोचति मुह्यमानः। (Mnd. Up., 3.1.2)
2. बालाग्रशतभागस्य शतधा कल्पितस्य च। भागो जीवः स विज्ञेयः स चानन्त्याय कल्पते। (Sv. Up., 5.9)
3. Sv. Up. 5.10.
4. Aparokṣānubhūti. 43.
5. Aparokṣānubhūti. 59.
6. तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय निरञ्जनः। (Mnd. UP., 3.1.3)
7. ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपाशैः। (Sv. Up., 5.13)
8. परमं साम्यमुपैति। (Mnd. Up., 3.1.3)

3

The Mystic Way

The Arduous Path

Having discerned a clear picture of the exactness of the singular goal, the anxious seeker, then proceeds to single out the exact path that leads to the coveted end. The path that leads to the goal is no smooth and even but "sharp, like the edge of a razor, being severely difficult to cross"[1]. As a result, "from among thousands, hardly a single person strives to attain it and from among thousands of striving persons hardly one realises the God in reality"[2]. Swami Krishna Prem says:

"Though there is in truth a door which leads from every house, even from the most ephemeral tenement, straight into it, yet it is a door which few can see and fewer can open"[3].

To wade a straight and direct way to the ultimate end is highly risky. Only the most proficient seekers, therefore, with tremendous manual and mental strength could venture to tread on it. "नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो:" is the great warning of the Upniṣads[4]. The revered seers, therefore, had been kind enough to show a less hazardous way with lesser amount of risks, albeit the process is

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1. क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया। (Kth. Up. 1.3.14)
2. Gītā. 7.3.
3. Qt. Mukhopadhyaya : Studies in the Upaniṣads. P.141.
4. Mnd. Up. 3.2.4

comparatively tardy. The short path, mentioned formerly, has been named the "bird's way" and the round-about way, which is a lengthy one is justifiably called the "ant's way".

According to the Barāhopaniṣad, there are two ways which Śuka and Vāmadeva followed to attain salvation. The former ventured the shorter path called the bird's way and Vāmadeva trod on the longer one called the ant's way[1]. The bird's way consists of the contemplation on the Mahāvākyas and other advanced methods, which lead the deserving aspirant to liberation in the same birth. But the other path, which is as slow as an ant's pace consists of Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma etc., which might require as lengthy a time as to accommodate a fairly good number of births! The first path is an instant giver of liberation whereas the second one leads to a gradual emancipation[2].

According to Vidyaranya, two methods may be applied to bring an animal into a stable; firstly by luring it with green grass etc, and secondly, forcing it by beating and sounding. It enters quickly by the former method. But, by the latter one, it runs here and there and at last when tired, it enters the place with great difficulties. Likewise, the mind can be pacified through two methods; firstly by observing equanimity towards the opposite phenomena of life and secondly by practising Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra etc. The former is quicker whereas the latter is time-taking[3].

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1. शुकश्च वामदेवश्च द्वे सृती देवनिर्मिते।
   शुको विहङ्गमः प्रोक्तो वामदेवः पिपीलिका। (B. Up., 4.36)
2. Ibid. 4.37-42
3. Jīvanmuktiviveka. P.156.

The Śāndilya Upaniṣad also proclaims two methods of destroying (pacifying) the mind viz. The method of Yoga and the method of knowledge. The Yogic method is repression of the modifications of the Citta (चित्तवृत्तिनिरोध:) and the method of knowledge is by observation, speculation and analysis[1]. Just as the activities of the world are cancelled with the activities of the sun (with the setting of sun), so also the cycle of birth and death is cancelled with the cancellation of mental activities.

To follow any of these paths, the basic and initial requirement is to humbly approach a master to guide the aspirant on the way to liberation. The Taittirīya nicely compares the teacher as one part, the pupil as other part, the union of which is unavoidable in the production of Vidyā[2].

The Preceptor

The most significant step towards liberation, which under no circumstance can be skipped, is the aspirant's humble approach to an illustrious preceptor or Guru. Naciketā approached Yama[3]; Nārada went to Sanatkumār[4], Satyakāma to Gautama[5] and Arjuna to Kṛṣ na[6]. "The knowledge of Brahman,". says Sankara,

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1. द्वौ क्रमौ चित्तनाशस्य योगो ज्ञानं मुनीश्वर।
   योगस्तु वृत्तिनिरोधो ज्ञानं सम्यगन्वेक्षणम्।। (1.41)
2. आचार्य: पूर्वरूपम्। अन्तेवास्युत्तररूपम्। विद्या सन्धि:। (T. Up., 1.3.3)
3. Kth. Up. 1.1.20
4. Ch. Up. 7.1.1-5
5. Ch. Up. 4.4.1-4
6. Gītā. 2.7

"should not be searched independently even by the person well-versed in the scriptures[1]".

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad, in order to articulate the unavoidability of a teacher, presents an analogy of a helpless person, who is blindfolded and stranded in a dreadful forest. Some compassionate passerby, having listened to his cry for succour, condescends to direct him to his original abode[2]. Similar is the plight of a worldly man.

According to Sankara a worldly man, likewise, is snatched away from his real universal existence to the forest of the body, which is full of awful creatures like air, bile, phlegm, blood, fat, flesh, bone, marrow, semen, worms, urine and stool. His eyes are tied with the strap of delusion, being thirsty for various worldly desires like wife, son, friend, animals, kinsman etc. Beset with miseries, he shouts, "I am his son; I am happy; I am in misery; I am deluded; I am a sinner etc". If he, co-incidentally comes across an enlightened soul, is directed the right path and told about his original self[3]. It is a tautology to say that the grief-stricken individual is the seeker and the kind hearted philanthropic person is none other than the Guru.

As an insect fallen in a whirlpool, revolves endlessly till it is rescued by a kind man to the bank, so also a mundane person, lost his way in the labyrinth of births and deaths does not rest in peace until he is guided to the path of liberation by the clement Guru[4].

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1. शास्त्रज्ञोऽपि स्वातन्त्र्येण ब्रह्मज्ञानान्वेषणं न कुर्यात्। (Mnd. Up. S.B. 1.2.12).
2. Ch. Up., 6.14.1-2.
3. Ch.Up. S.B., 6.14.2.
4. P.D. 1.30-32.

The Upaniṣads and other scriptures have laid immense importance on the preceptor. The knowledge received only from a Guru is fruitful, not otherwise. The aspirant with a teacher only gets the knowledge[1]. The so-called knowledge, acquired otherwise by browsing etc. is inert, a burden, which can never be instrumental in emancipation[2]. Only the Guru can take the aspirant out of the gloom. The right way can only be shown by the Ācārya.

The tough journey and the uneven way clearly indicate that the torchbearer has to be an able and unique guide. He has to possess the actual knowledge of the path and the goal. The Upaniṣads. therefore declare that a teacher has to be a Śrotriya and Brahmaniṣṭha[3].

A well-versed person in Vedas is a Śrotriya, and a Brahmaniṣṭha, according to Sankara is a person absorbed in the non-dual Bhrahman[4]. In other words, the teacher is an enlightened person who has realised Brahman and hence a liberated soul (जीवन्मुक्त), since the knowledge of Brahman ends in becoming the known (ब्रह्मैव भवति)[5]. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Guru is paid obeisance as God.

The Gītā has used attributive words like Jñānī and Tattvadarśī for the preceptor[6]. Both the words ultimately

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1. श्रुतं ह्येव मे भगवद्दृशेभ्य आचार्याद्धैव विद्या विदिता साधिष्टं प्रापतीति। (Ch. Up. 4.9.3)
2. भवेद्वीर्यवती विद्या गुरुवक्त्रसमुद्भवा।
   अन्यथा फलहीना स्यान्निर्वीर्याप्यति दुःखदा।। (S.S., 3.11)
3. Mnd. Up. 1.2.12.
4. Mnd. Up. S.B., 1.2.12
5. Mnd. Up. 3.2.9
6. उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः। (Gītā. 4.34)

generate the same meaning. Jñāni or a person having knowledge (apparently of Brahman) and a person who is a seer of the actuality (Tattva) are no different. Because Brahman is the only "Tattva" or truth. The knower, by acquiring the knowledge becomes identical with It.

In the Kaṭhopaniṣad, the preceptor has been named Ananya or a person who is identified with Brahman and does not notice duality. The gnosis, imparted by him, therefore, is nothing other than his own experience and the path shown is the same that he has already waded. As a result, there is no scare of getting confused or moving astray. Yama, the great preceptor, assures Naciketā against all confusion and doubt[1]: "अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति"

It is very clear now, why Himalayan importance has been piled on approaching and surrendering to a preceptor. All the Upaniṣads, each and every scripture, dealing with this inner science have bestowed optimum importance on seeking refuge beside an enlightened soul, otherwise called a Guru. The knowledge received from him is fruitful not otherwise[2]. The Śivasaṁhitā goes to the extent of asserting that the knowledge, received from sources, other than a Guru is not only futile but also the breeder of immense sorrow. The Guru should, therefore, be revered and served like one's own parent. The aspirant, by satisfying the preceptor, speedily acquires the knowledge and the result thereof[3].

The Disciple

Huge importance has been heaped on the disciple, who is the actual performer of the whole function. The

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1. Kth. Up. 1.2.8.
2. Idid.
3. S.S. 3.11-13.

treasure of Upaniṣadic knowledge does not open its door to the undeserving lot, how numerous their number may be. An aspirant, who really feels the necessity and importance of the knowledge, only is imparted the same. Naciketā, the great child aspirant had to pass the ordeal of temptation in order to prove his immaculate desire. Contrary to common belief, the qualification of an aspirant has never honoured any bar of caste or sex. The preceptor could welcome Satyakāma, with unknown parentage willingly[1]. Gārgī and Maitreyī were imparted the knowledge of Brahman by the illustrious Yājñavalkya[2]. Following are the pre-requisite qualities for an aspirant:

i. Introversion

The mind has a tendency to move outwards, never contemplating on the inner world. Rarely a wise man seeks immortality by turning his back to the mortal world[3]. This introversion is the primary quality that urges the aspirant to acquire other qualities as well. It is impossible to be an aspirant without insight.

ii. Cessation from doing wrong

Aspiring to seek immortality presupposes cessation from wrongdoing. A person who has not shunned the wrong way cannot attain the Ātman. In other words, the way to Ātman is not the way of wrong doers.

iii. Faith and Interest (Śraddhā)

Śraddhā (craving and faith) is another requisite for the aspirant. Śraddhā is in fact, his treasure which he

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1. Ch. Up. 4.4.4
2. Br. Up. 3.6, Br. Up. 2.4.
3. Kth. Up. 2.1.1.

carries till he reaches his goal. Where there is no will, there is no way. A strong desire to attain the goal inevitably is the foremost condition for a person to be called an aspirant. A person with Śraddhā only acquires the knowledge and he who is devoid of it is sceptic and is doomed to perish.

iv. Austerity

"Tapas" or austerity has no substitute in the process of knowledge. Indra did "Tapas" for one hundred years to be initiated. Truth and austerity, according to Muṇḍaka, are highly necessary.

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka defines an aspirant as "Śānta, (शान्त) Dānta, (दान्त) Uparata, (उपरत) Titikṣu (तितिक्षु) and Samāhita (समाहित)"[1]. Śānta (self controlled) means a person who desists from the activities of the external organs. Dānta desists from activities of the internal organs. Uparata is withdrawn into himself or free from all desires. Samāhita means one-pointed or having concentration.

According to Sadananda, the disciple has to be well versed in Vedas with the branches, eschewer of forbidden and ritualistic deeds, performer of Nitya, Naimittika, Prāyaścitta and meditations, wise and the owner of the four Sādhanās. The four Sādhanās are: 1. Discrimination between the permanent and the transient (नित्यानित्यवस्तुविवेक); 2. Renunciation of the fruits of action in this world and in the other (इहामुत्रार्थभोगविराग); 3. The six treasures of Śama etc. and 4. The desire of emancipation (मुमुक्षा)[2].

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1. 4.4.23.
2. Vedāntasāra. 4-8.

The discrimination between permanent and transient means to realise that Brahman alone is real and permanent. Everything other than Brahman is unreal. The second Sādhanā means an utter disregard for the enjoyments of the world and of heaven etc. The six treasures are Śama (शम) (restraint of outgoing propensities), Dama (दम) (restraint of sense organs), Uparati (उपरति) (the engagement of the mind in the inner world), Titikṣā (तितिक्षा) (for-bearance of the sorrows without lamentation), Śraddhā (श्रद्धा) (faith) and Samādhāna (self-settled-ness). Mumukṣutva is the yearning for emancipation from the bondage of the world.

According to Sankara, an aspirant has to calm his mind (प्रशान्त चित्त), has to be victorious over his senses, should have least bad habits, obedient, should have numbers of ideal qualities and should have an immense desire of emancipation[1].

Muṇḍaka confirms that the knowledge of Brahman should be imparted to the persons who duly perform their duties, who have faith, who offer oblation in the Ekarṣi fire and have carried fire on their heads[2]. Finally the Upaniṣads restrict that the knowledge of Brahman has to be imparted to a disciple, duly initiated or to the eldest son of the family. The knowledge is precious enough to be concealed from others. It should not be imparted to any other person even if the entire wealth of the whole

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1. प्रशान्तचित्ताय जितेन्द्रियाय च प्रहीणदोषाय यथोक्तकारिणे।
गुणान्वितायानुगताय सर्वदा प्रदेयमेतत्सततं मुमुक्षवे।। (Up. Sāhasrī., 16.72)
2. क्रियावन्तः श्रोत्रिया ब्रह्मनिष्ठाः स्वयं जुह्वत एकर्षिं श्रद्धयन्तः।
तेषामेवैतां ब्रह्मविद्यां वदेत शिरोव्रतं विधिवद्यैस्तु चीर्णम्।। (Mnd. Up. 3.2.10)

world is offered to the preceptor in return[1]. The Śvetāśvatara[2] further confirms the very theory with the following verse:

"वेदान्ते परमं गुह्यं पुराकल्पे प्रचोदितम्।
नाप्रशान्ताय दातव्यं नापुत्रायाशिष्याय वा पुन:।।"

Categories of Disciples

Although the Upaniṣads do not categorically divide disciples into specific groups, yet mention of Virocana, Indra, Naciketā and Nārada certainly indicates towards their differences of capabilities. Later treatises have made distinct categorisation of the same. According to Śiva Saṁhitā, aspirants belong to four categories, namely, Mṛdu, Madhya, Atimātra and Atimātratama with the following qualities.

The Mṛdu or mild type of an aspirant is less enterprising, forgetful, ailing, blamer of the preceptor, greedy, sinful, gourmand, attached to women, fickle minded, coward, dependant and cruel. His conduct is bad and he is weak. The moderate or Madhya aspirant has a poised mind, pardons others, virtuous, sweet-tongued and righteous. An ardent aspirant (Atimātra) is steady-minded, knower of Laya Yoga, independent-minded, energetic, magnanimous, sympathetic, forgiving, truthful, courageous, matured, faithful, respects the preceptor and is engaged in the practice of Yoga. The most ardent (Atimātratama) is extremely energetic, highly enterprising, heroic, well versed in scriptures, persevering, controller of his sensories, fearless, charitable, competent, good-natured, firm, religious,

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1. Ch. Up. 3.11.5-6.
2. 6.22.

endeavouring, recluse and has no big ailment. It is a tautology to call him the best and the fittest[1].

The Ant's Way

The ant's way is perfectly scientific uplift of physical and psychic conditions of aspirants from a mundane level to the divine state in a slow and steady process. It is the less hazardous way, which has a stabler chance of attainment of the goal. It is the way of Yoga. Yoga finds a vital place in the Upaniṣads, more explicitly in later ones. But the major eleven Upaniṣads have been less descriptive, though highly suggestive in this regard. Stray stanzas, found here and there are like scattered jewels spread hither and thither. An attempt to sketch an outline of the highly eulogised science follows:

Eight Steps of Yoga

Yoga has eight steps: Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi[2].The Amṛtanādopniṣad counts six Angas of Yoga viz. Pratyāhāra, Dhyāna, Prāṇāyāma, Dhāraṇā, Tarka and Samādhi[3].

Yama

The word "Yama" means to desist. The significance is obvious. It means to desist from certain bad qualities. Several noble qualities have been counted under Yama,

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1. S.S. 5.18-31.
2. यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाधयोऽष्टावङ्गानि।(Y.S. 2.29)
3. प्रत्याहारस्तथा ध्यानं प्राणायामोऽथ धारणा।
   तर्कश्चैव समाधिश्च षड़ङ्गो योग उच्यते।। Amṛtanādopaniṣad (6)

their numbers varying. Patanjali regards non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence, non-hoarding as Yama[1]. The Barāhopanisad adds forgiveness, endurance, compassion, meekness, balanced diet and cleanliness with the singular barring of non-hoarding[2]. Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad holds the same view[3].

Niyama

According to Patanjali cleanliness, satisfaction, penance, study and continuous thinking of God are the five Niyamas[4]. But the Sandilya Upaniṣad adds a few more qualities to the same. It counts them as Tapa, Santoṣa, Āstikya, Dāna, Īśvarpūjan, Siddhāntavākyaśravaṇa Hrī, Mati, Japa and Vrata[5].

Asanas (Postures)

While the minor Upaniṣads provide detailed descriptions about the postures or Āsanas, the major Upaniṣads are neither silent nor eloquent about them. The Kaṭha sheds lights by adopting the word Yoga and defining it as the steady retention of the organs. That Yoga subserves, as the means to attain the goal is made vivid by the same Upaniṣad[6]. The Śvetāśvatara gives details of Prāṇāyāma and a few other Yogic signs[7].

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1. अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः। (Y.S., 2.30)
2. 4.12.
3. Śāndilya Up., 1
4. शौचसन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः। (Y.S., 2.32)
5. Sāndilya Up. 2
6. तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम्। (Kth. Up., 2.3.11)
7. Sv. Up., 2.8-11.

So, it would not be out of place to discuss a little about the postures etc. Postures are the first accessory of the Haṭhayoga and are necessary to make the body steady, light and healthy[1]. The number of Āsanas have been enumerated differently by different sages. In Śiva Saṁhitā, the number is eighty-four whereas sage Gheranḍa considers that there are as many Āsanas as there are living beings. Out of them eighty-four are important, out of which thirty-two are fruitful for the human beings[2]. The thirty-two Asanas are Siddha, Padma, Bhadra, Mukta, Vajra, Svastika, Siṁha, Gomukha, Bīra, Dhanu, Mṛta, Gupta, Matsya, Matsyendra, Gorakṣa, Paścimottana, Utkaṭa, Sankaṭa, Mayūra, Kukkuṭa, Kūrma, Uttānakūrma, Uttānamandūka, Bṛkṣa, Muṇḍaka, Garuḍa, Bṛṣa, Salabha, Makara, Uṣṭra, Bhujanga and Yogāsana. The Barāhopaniṣad enumerates eleven Āsanas, Śāṇḍilya eight and Yogakuṇḍalī two. In fact, Āsanas are those postures sitting on which, the aspirant can have continuous thought of Brahman, not those that kill the comforts of the body[3].

Like Āsanas, other practices, called Mudrās, are also practised by the Yogīs for the perfection of Yoga. Diseases are destroyed and the way to salvation is paved by them[4]. In Haṭha-Yoga-Pradīpikā, ten Mudrās have been enumerated: Mahāmudrā, Mahābandha, Mahābedha, Khecarī, Uddīyāna, Mulabandha, Jālandhara,

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1. कुर्यात्तदासनं स्थैर्यमारोग्यं चाङ्गलाघवम्। (H.Y.P., 1.17)
2. चतुरशीत्यासनानि सन्ति नानाविधानि च। (S.S., 3.98)
   आसनानि समस्तानि यावन्तो जीवजन्तव:।
   चतुरशीतिलक्षाणि शिवेन कथिता पुरा।। (G.S., 2.1)
3. सुखेनैव भवेद् यस्मिन्नजस्रं ब्रह्मचिन्तनम्।
   आसनं तद्विजानीयान्नेतरत् सुखनाशनम्।। (Aparokṣānubhūti, 112)
4. G.S 3.14

Viparītakaraṇī, Vajrolī and Śakticālana[1]. Sage Gheranḍa adds Taḍāgī, Māṇḍavī, Śāmbhavī, Pancadhārinī, Aswinī, Pāśinī, Kākī, Mātangī and Bhujanginī to the lot[2].

Prāṇāyāma

Prāṇāyāma is the process through which Kunḍalinī is raised. It is the control of the vital force (Prāṇa) by cancelling and regulating the flow of inhalation and exhalation[3], otherwise known as Recaka, Pūraka and Kumbhaka. It is the method by which the air inside the body, which is life itself, is controlled. So long as the respiration continues, life remains in the body. The moment it is stopped, the body is lifeless. Hence the control of air is essential to control the life-force in the body. Yogīs believe that the movement of the mind is due to the movement of the air. The control of air, therefore, results in the control of the mind[4].

The Nāḍīs

It would not be out of context to discuss a few words about the Nādīs, which occupy the central place in the Haṭha Yoga. There seems to be difference of opinion about the number of Nāḍīs. According to Śiva Saṁhitā, it is three and half lakhs, the principal being fourteen: Suṣumnā, Iḍā, Pingalā, Hastijihvikā, Kuhu, Saraswatī, Pūṣā, Sankhinī, Payaswinī, Vāruṇī, Alambuṣā, Viśvodarī and Yaśasvinī. According to Haṭhayogapradīpikā, the number

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1. H.Y.P., 3.7, 95
2. G.S., 3.1-3
3. तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः। (Y.S., 2.49)
4. यावद्वायुः स्थितो देहे तावज्जीवनमुच्यते।
   मरणं तस्य निष्क्रान्तिस्ततो वायुं निरोधयेत्।। (H.Y.P., 2.3)

of Nāḍīs is seventy two thousand[1]. Kaṭha mentions the number to be one hundred and one[2]. Irrespective of their number the most important of them are three: Suṣumnā, Iḍā and Pingalā. Iḍā is situated in the left side and embraces the Suṣumnā. Pingalā is in the right side and embraces the Suṣumnā[3]. The Suṣumnā, which is the middle one, is the only Nādī, which brings liberation. All the other Nādīs are the causes of bondage[4].

The Kunḍalinī and the Cakras

The Suṣumnā becomes the cause of liberation when Kunḍalinī which is in deep sleep in Mūlādhāra pierces the six Cakras and enters the Sahasrāra. The six Cakras, according to the Haṭha Yogīs are: Mulādhara (near the anus), Swādhiṣthana (near the sex organ), Maṇipura (near the abdomen), Anāhata (near the navel), Viśuddha (near the heart) and Ajñā Cakra (between eyebrows). The Kunḍalinī Śakti lies latent in the Mūlādhāra like a coiled serpent. By constant practice of Prāṇāyāma, it rises and moves upwards piercing the Cakras one by one and reaches the Sahasrāra Cakra in the head.

Time and Place of Prāṇāyāma

Although Prāṇāyāma is a regular practice, it should not be started any time. The ideal time to start Prāṇāyāma is autumn or spring. Starting Prāṇāyāma in the other seasons causes diseases. It is forbidden to practise

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1. 4.18
2. शतं चैका च हृदयस्य नाड्य:। (Kth. Up., 2.3.16)
3. S.S. 2.25-26
4. तासां मूर्धानमभिनि:सृतैका तयोर्ध्वमायन्नमृतत्वमेति
   विष्वङन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति। (Ch. Up., 8.6.6)

Prāṇāyāma in a far distant place (from one's residence), in the forest, or in the capital city (crowded place). A pious place, where alms are available and which is free from troubles is ideal for Prāṇāyāma. Building a hut with a small boundary, the Yogī should practise Prāṇāyāma secretly [1].

Before going to details about Prāṇāyāma, it is better to discuss a little about the airs present in the body. Yogīs affirm the presence of ten airs in the body. They are: Prāṇa, Apāna, Samāna, Udāna, Vyāna, Nāga, Kūrma, Kṛkala, Devadatta and Dhanañjaya[2].

As stated before, there are thousands of Nāḍīs the main ones being few. The Nāḍis have to be purified in order to make the air flow only through Suṣumṅā Nāḍī. The Nāḍīs can be, according to Gheranḍa Saṁhitā, purified by two methods namely the Samanu method and the Nirmanu method. The Nirmanu method is by the Dhautis, whereas Samanu is through the control of air[3].

Division of Prāṇāyāma

Mainly Prāṇāyāma is divided in to three kinds namely Recaka, Pūraka and Kumbhaka, which mean to exhale, to inhale and to retain respectively. Kumbhaka again is divided into Sahita and Kevala. Sahita Kumbhaka means confining the air along with filling and expelling. Kevala is without them. A Yogī is advised to practise Sahita kumbhaka, so long as he is not perfect in the Kevala. The

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1. G.S., 5.2-7
2. G.S., 5.59-66
3. नाड़ीशुद्धिर्द्विधा प्रोक्ता समनुर्निर्मनुस्तथा।
   बीजेन समनुं कुर्यान्निर्मनुं धौतिकर्मणा।। (G.S., 5.35)

Kumbhakas are of eight kinds: Suryabhedana, Ujjāyī, Sītkārī, Śitali, Bhastrikā, Bhrāmarī, Mūrchā and Plāvinī.

i. Sūryabhedana Kumbhaka

To perform this Kumbhaka, the Yogī first of all sits in any posture and draws in the air slowly through the right nostril. Then he confines it within, so that it fills from nails to tip of the hair and then he lets it out slowly through the left nostril[1].

ii. Ujjāyī

Having closed the mouth, the Yogī draws air through both the nostrils in such a way that it goes touching from the throat to the chest by making a little sound. Then he retains the air, (as instructed before) and then lets it go through the left nostril.

iii. Sitkāri

While performing Sitkāri, the Yogī draws the air through the mouth by keeping the tongue between the lips. The air thus drawn is not expelled through the mouth but through the nose.

iv. Śītalī

The Yogī protrudes the tongue a little out of the lips and draws the air and confines it and finally expels it through the nostrils.

v. Bhastrikā

To perform Bhastrikā, the Yogī sits on the lotus posture (Padmāsana) and keeping the body straight, closing the mouth carefully, lets the air be expelled

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1. H.Y.P. 2.49-50.

through the nose. Then he draws the air with a sound, which touches the throat, chest and head, and fills the lotus of the heart. It is expelled and drawn again and again. This Prāṇāyāma is also done by drawing the air through the right nostril, by pressing the thumb against the left nostril. When filled to the full, the Yogī closes the right nostril with the fourth finger and confines the air properly. Then he expels the air through the left nostril.

vi. Bhrāmarī

Bhrāmari is a Prāṇāyāma which causes a sort of ecstasy in the mind of the Yogī. The Yogi fills the air with force and while expelling the air imitates the sound of a wasp[1].

vii. Mūrchā

The Yogī fills the air and closes the passage with Jālandhara Bandha firmly and then expels the air slowly. It causes the mind to swoon and is soothing[2].

viii. Plāvinī

It is a practice by doing which the body can be made to float on deep water. To perform it, the Yogī fills the belly with air to its utmost and makes the body light[3].

The four stages of Prāṇāyāma

A Yogī passes through four stages while practising Prāṇāyāma. These are: Ārambha, Ghaṭa, Paricaya and Niṣpatti. In the first stage, there is perspiration in the

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1. वेगाद् घोषं पूरकं भृङ्गनादं भृङ्गीनादं रेचकं मन्द-मन्दम्।
   योगीन्द्राणामेवमभ्यासयोगात् चित्ते जाता काचिदानन्दलीला।। (H.Y.P., 2.68)
2. Ibid. 2.69.
3. Ibid. 2.70.

body. The same is advised to be rubbed in the body (and not wiped out) as by doing so the body becomes stronger. In the second stage, there is quivering in the body. In the third stage there is steadiness of body[1]. The fourth is attainment of success.

Pratyāhāra

Pratyāhāra literally means withdrawal. It is a practice in which the Yogī restrains the senses from the objects so that the senses follow the nature of the mind[2].The Viṣhnu Purāṇa[3] agrees in the same definition by viewing:

"शब्दादिष्वनुरक्तानि निगृह्याक्षाणि योगवित्।

कुर्याच्चित्तानुकारीणि प्रत्याहारपरायण:।।"

To practise Pratyāhāra one has to withdraw the mind both from praise and blame, from stink and savour, from sweetness and sourness. The only aim of the Yogī should be to keep the senses confined and controlled in one's own self[4]. Sankara gives a unique definition to this practice. According to him, a Yogī has to see Ātman in the objects and merge the mind in the consciousness[5].

The five steps of Yoga, described above are the external means of attainment. The next three viz. the Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi are more intimate, which have to be practised more intensely. The last three practices put together are called Saṁyama[6].

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1. H.Y.P. 2.12.
2. स्वविषयासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्य स्वरूानुकारइवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहार:। (Y.S., 2.54)
3. 6.7.43.
4. G.S. 4.3-5.
5. विषयेष्वात्मतां दृष्ट्वा मनसश्चितिमज्जनम्।
   प्रत्याहार: स विज्ञेयोऽभ्यसनीयो मुहुक्षुभि:।। (Aparokṣānubhūti, 121)
6. त्रयमेकत्र संयम:। (Y.S., 3.4)

Dhāraṇā

Dhāraṇā, which literally means to hold (the mind) is the practice in which the mind is held tight to one place[1]. The place might be the navel, the heart, the brain, the tip of the nose, or any outward object. According to Viṣnu Purāṇa, it is impossible to meditate on Brahman, which is beyond determination. Therefore, the Yogī must, in the beginning, meditate on a gross (personified) form of the Lord[2].

The aspirant is advised to practise Dhāraṇā on the Mulādhāra, Svādhisṭhāna, Maṇipura, Anāhata, Viśuddha and Ājñā, each for the duration of two hours[3]. The Śiva Saṁhitā[4] enumerates the following Dhāraṇās with their results:

The Yogi should sit on Padmāsana and fix his attention on the cavity of the throat and place his tongue at the base of the palate. By doing so, he conquers hunger and thirst. Secondly, he should fix the mind on the Kūrmanāḍī just below the throat by doing which he acquires great concentration of mind.

Kinds of Dhāraṇā

Dhāraṇā has been divided into three categories i.e. Mano Dhāraṇā, Bāhyākāśa Dhāraṇā and Pancamūrti Dhāraṇā. The first is to fix the mind in the self; second is to bring the external sky to the internal one; the third is to contemplate on the five elements viz. earth, water, air,

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1. देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा। (Y.S., 3.1)
2. न तद्योगयुजा शक्यं नृप चिन्तयितुं यतः।
   ततः स्थूलं हरेः रूपं चिन्तयेद् विश्वगोचरम्।। (Viṣṇupurāṇa, 6.7.55)
3. S.S. 3.76.
4. 5.62-63.

fire and ether[1]. The Yogī is advised to imagine a third eye on his forehead and fix his attention on it. As a result, even the most wicked person obtains the supreme end[2]. The Yogī may fix his mind on vacuum or Śunya even while walking, sleeping, eating etc. As a result, he is absorbed in the Cidākāśa. The Yogī, who is desirous to succeed, fixes his gaze on the tip of the nose, while sitting on Padmāsana. Thereby he obtains the power of Khecharī and the force of his practice. According to Sankara, the true meaning of Dhāraṇā is to behold Brahman in every object whereever the mind goes and to fix the mind there[3].

Dhyāna

Dhyāna or meditation is the next and the most vital step for the aspirant. The Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇa Upaniṣad says "सर्वशरीरेषु चैतन्यैकतानता ध्यानम्"[4]. It has been defined by Patanjali as that state of mind, where, barring all other thoughts, there is a constant flow of one thought only[5]. Meditation, according to Vidyaraṇya Muni is meant for the weaker aspirant who is unable to realise that he is Brahman[6].

Meditation therefore is an unavoidable step on the way of self-realisation. Just as a treasure, buried under ground is available only by digging, so also a direct knowledge of the Self is possible only through Dhyāna. The hidden treasure of Self is achieved by delving deep

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1. Śāṇḍilya. Up. 1.8.11.
2. S.S. 5.66-67.
3. यत्र-यत्र मनो याति ब्रह्मणस्तत्र दर्शनात्।
   मनसो धारणं चैव धारणा सा परा मता।। (Aparokṣānubhūti, 122)
4. P.347.
5. तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम्। (Y.S., 3.2)
6. साक्षात्कर्तुमशक्तोऽपि चिन्तयेन्मामशङ्कित:। (P.D., 9.152)

into one's own consciousness with the help of the spade of meditation[1].

The Śvetāśvatara puts forth a detailed description of Dhyāna and its accessories. According to it, a practitioner has to remember Savitṛ or the Sun god before the commencement of meditation. First of all one has to sit with his chest, neck and head erect and steady. Then the senses are to be withdrawn into the heart with the help of the mind. Then he has to resort to Brahman[2].

Place of Dhyāna

The place for performing Dhyāna should be chosen with utmost care. It has to be neat and clean. The ground should be even, free from pebbles or sand, should not have fire around. It has to be free from sound and water. It should not be a public place. The atmosphere of the place should be pleasing and not painful to the mind[3]. The Gītā reiterates that the Yogī should spread his mat on a place neither too high, nor too low. Holding his body, neck and head straight, he should look at the tip of the nose and think of Brahman. Practising meditation steadily with fearlessness and celibacy, one attains deep peace of mind and liberation at last[4].

Kinds of Dhyāna

Meditation or Dhyāna has been divided into two categories: Saguṇa Dhyāna and Nirguṇa Dhyāna. Saguṇa

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1. यथागाधनिधेर्लब्धौ नोपायः खननं विना।
   मल्लाभेऽपि तथा स्वात्मचिन्तां मुक्त्वा न चापरः।। (P.D., 9.153)
2. 2.8-9.
3. समे शुचौ शर्करावह्निवालुकाविवर्जिते शब्दजलाश्रयादिभिः।
   मनोऽनुकूले न तु चक्षुपीड़ने गुहानिवाताश्रयणे प्रयोजयेत्।। (Sv. Up., 2.10)
4. 6.10-15

Dhyāna means meditation on an image, whereas Nirguṇa Dhyāna is meditating on one's own self. Meditation is also divided into three categories: gross, (स्थूल) light (ज्योति) and subtle (सूक्ष्म) [1].

The gross meditation is meditation on a gross object, or on the personal god, whereas the light meditation is the concentration at the middle of eyebrows, and the subtle meditation is concentration on Kuṇḍalinī.

The result of meditation is the concentration of mind by which the knowledge (that I am verily the Brahman) becomes stable. Even if the result is not quick, one should go on practising meditation, because there is no doubt about the Realisation.

Although in the beginning, the aspirant is advised proper time and physical posture to practise meditation, gradually, at the advanced stage, meditation becomes an unavoidable mental activity for him. He goes to the limit of meditating in the dreams too[2].

As the Yogī advances on the path of Yoga, he gradually sees fog, smoke, sun, wind, fire, fireflies, lightening, crystal, moon etc. which signify that the Yogī has come very near to the vision of Brahman i.e. the realisation of the Supreme Reality[3]. He also undergoes a few physical changes. The body becomes light, healthy and has a sweet fragrance. The complexion of the body becomes fairer. The voice becomes pleasant. The

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1. स्थूलं ज्योतिस्तथा सूक्ष्मं ध्यानस्य त्रिविधं विदु:।
   स्थूलं मूर्तिमयं प्रोक्तं ज्योतिस्तेजोमयं तथा।
   सूक्ष्मं विन्दुमयं ब्रह्म कुण्डली परदेवता।। (G.S., 6.1)
2. वेदाध्यायी ह्यप्रमत्तोऽधीते स्वप्नेऽधिवासित:।
   जपिता तु जपत्येव तथा ध्यातापि वासयेत्।। (P.D., 9.81)
3. Sv. Up. 2.11.

excretion becomes less. When burnt by fire of Yoga, the Yogī is free from old age and death[1].

Meditation on Om

The mystic expression "Om" and the meditation there on, has secured a highly significant place in the Upaniṣadic spiritual practice. While imparting the knowledge of Brahman, the God of death (Yama) indicates to a brief expression of the Ultimate Reality, to which all the Vedas lead, for which rigorous celibacy is practised, for which severe austerity is performed. It is the meaningful Om[2], the greatest and the last support, meditating on which the seeker attains the Brahmaloka[3]. It is the manifest world, the past, present and future and anything beyond it. It is Brahman[4].

The letter "Om" consists of three morae, namely, A, U and M, which have been identified with the three states of human consciousness, and the three quarters of Brahman as well.

The first mora "A" is identified with Vaiśvānara, whose purview of action is the waking state, its consciousness being confined to the external world. It has seven limbs (sky, sun, wind, ether, water, earth and sacrificial fire)[5], nineteen mouths (ten organs, five vital

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1. Ibid 2.13, 14.
2. सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्वदन्ति।
   यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योमित्येतत्।। (Kth. Up., 1.2.15)
3. Ibid. 1.2.16-17
4. ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद्भविष्यदिति सर्वमोङ्कार एव। यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योङ्कार एव।। (Mdk. Up., 1)
5. Ch. Up. 5.18.2

forces, Mana, Buddhi, Ahaṁkāra and Citta) and enjoys the gross objects[1].

The second mora "M" is identified with Taijas, the second quarter of Brahman, whose sphere is dream and consciousness internal, has the same seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and is the eater of subtle[2].

The third mora "M" is identified with the Prājña, the third quarter of Brahman, whose purview is dreamless deep sleep (Suṣupti) and is a mass of consciousness and is abundant with bliss. The former two states are absorbed in the third and come out of it again and again. So also while repeating Om, the first two letters are absorbed in the third "M" and come out of it again and again. Sankara compares "M" to a measuring pot (Prastha), where the two letters are put and taken out like grains in a pot[3].

The fourth state which is non-dual; beyond manifestation of consciousness, is identical with the partless Om.

Thus Om is identical both with the Saguṇa as well as the Nirguṇa Brahman[4]. It is also the Īśvara, who dwells in the hearts of beings[5]. In it ceases the duality (or

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1. जागरितस्थानो बहिष्प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः स्थूलभुग्वैश्वानरः प्रथमः पादः। (Mdk. Up., 3)
2. स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तःप्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः प्रविविक्तभुक् तैजसो द्वितीयः पादः। (Mdk.Up., 4)
3. विश्वतैजसौ प्राज्ञेन प्रलयोत्पत्त्योः प्रवेशनिर्गमाभ्यां प्रस्थेनैव यवाः। (Mdk.Up.S.B., 11)
4. प्रणवो ह्यपरं ब्रह्म प्रणवश्चपरः स्मृतः। (Mdk. K., 1.26)
5. प्रणवं हीश्वरं विद्यात् सर्वस्य हृदि संस्थितम्। (Mdk. K., 1.28)

multiplicity)[1] of the universe, has no interior, no exterior, nothing before and nothing after[2].

Om or Pranava, in the Yoga system, has been regarded as the expression word of Iśvara[3], which has to be repeated along with the meditation on Isvara[4]. The repetition of Om has been regarded as the repeller of hurdles on the way to Yoga. Therefore, the aspirant is advised to repeat the same lengthily in a lonely place[5].

According to Pancadaśī, the meditation on Om is mainly non-attributive or Nirguṇa Upāsanā, but can also be attributive or saguṇa[6].

In Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, Om is regarded effective in the realisation of Brahman by the individual self. Om is beautifully compared to a bow, the self to an arrow while Brahman to the target. The arrow of the self, sharpened by meditation, should be darted to hit Brahman, so that it (self) becomes one with the target (Brahman)[7].

Om, thus is a unique symbol and is essential in the realisation of Brahman. It is both the means and the end. The words of Aurobindo are relevant: "All words and

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1. अमात्रोऽनन्तमात्रश्च द्वैतस्योपशमः शिवः। (Mdk.K., 1.29)
2. अपूर्वोऽनन्तरोऽबाह्योऽनपरः प्रणवोऽव्ययः। (Mdk.K., 1.26)
3. तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः। (Y.S., 1.27)
4. तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्। (Y.S., 1.28)
5. S.S. 3.57.
6. प्रणवोपास्तयः प्रायो निर्गुणा एव वेदगाः।
   क्वचित्सगुणताप्युक्ता प्रणवोपासनस्य हि।। (P.D., 9.147)
7. धनुर्गृहीत्वौपनिषदं महास्त्रं शरं ह्युपासानिशितं सन्धयीत।
   आयम्य तद्भावगतेन चेतसा लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि।। (Mnd. Up. 2.2.3)
   प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते।
   अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत्तन्मयो भवेत्।। (Mnd.Up., 2.2.4)

thoughts are an out-flowering of the great Om: the word, the Eternal... It is itself, integrally, the Supreme intangible, the original unity ... self-existent above all, manifestation in the Supernal Being"[1].

Samādhi

The final phase of the eight-fold path is the Samādhi or trance. When the meditation becomes very deep, only the object of meditation remains in the mind. Even the thought of the meditator is obliterated. This state is called Samādhi[2]. Samādhi has two phases. The first phase is the Savikalpaka and the second is Nirvikalpaka.

Savikalpaka

Savikalpaka Samādhi is the state where the mental state takes the form of the non-dual Brahman. But the distinction of knower, knowledge and the known very much remains present. It is a state where the mind observes both the phenomenon and the noumenon.

Just as, during the observation of a clay elephant, the knowledge of clay remains present, along with the knowledge of elephant, so also, during the Savikalpaka Samādhi, the knowledge of non-duality (Advaita) manifests itself along with the knowledge of the duality (Dvaita)[3].

Nirvikalpaka

From this stage (Savikalpaka), through the practice of Paravairāgya, the Yogī reaches the Nirvikalpaka Samādhi. According to Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad, Samādhi is the state where the Jīvātman is one with Paramātman, where the

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1. Essays on the Gītā. P.101
2. तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः। (Y.S., 3.3)
3. तत्र सविकल्पको नाम ज्ञातृज्ञानादिविकल्पलयानपेक्षयाद्वितीयवस्तुनि तदाकाराकारितायाश्चित्तवृत्तेः अवस्थानम्। तदा मृन्मयगजादिभानेऽपि मृद्भानवद् द्वैतभानेऽप्यद्वैतं भासते। (Vedānta Sāra, 61)

knower, the known and the knowledge are one[1]. It is the highest bliss and is pure consciousness. Vidyaranya defines it as a stage where the concept of meditator and meditation is lost and only the object of meditation remains[2].

It is called Rājayoga or Unmanī or Manonmanī in the Yogic parlance. It is the aim of all Yogic activities. Without reaching the stage of Rājayoga, the various postures, Prāṇāyāmas and other means are fruitless. Haṭha Yoga, according to Swatmarama Swami should not be practised or taught for any other reason (like attainment of Siddhis etc.), but only for the attainment of Rājayoga[3].

In the Nirvikalpaka Samādhi, the Yogī hears without the ears, tastes without tongue, smells without nose, touches without skin and sees without eyes. The stage has been described in a peculiar way:

"The blind man pierced the pearl; the fingerless put a thread into it; the neckless wore it; and the tongueless praised it"[4].

The Kuṇḍalinī reaches the final Cakra i.e. Sahasrāra, or the thousand petalled lotus, which is otherwise known as Kailāsa. The mind of the Yogī is fixed at this place and he is free from death. He is capable of pronouncing death sentence to the god of death[5]. For the Yogī, none by the name of 'I' exists but everything becomes Ātman. Or, the Jivātman and Paramātman both, for him become the "I"

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1. 1.8.11.
2. ध्यातृध्याने परित्यज्य क्रमाद् ध्येयैकगोचरम्। (P.D., 1.55)
3. सर्वाण्यपि हठाभ्यासे राजयोगफलावधि।। (H.Y.P., 1.69)
4. Sivanand : Fourteen Lessons on Rājayoga. P.79.
5. मृत्योर्मृत्युं विधायाशु.....। (S.S., 5.202)

and "am". Renouncing both "I" and "you", he contemplates on the indivisible.

At this stage, the mind is neither lost nor scattered, but becomes motionless. The state of mind at this stage is compared to the flame of a lamp not flickering due to lack of motion of air[1] in the atmosphere.

This Samādhi is known as Dharmamegha or the cloud of Dharma, since it showers piety on the performer by destroying his past impressions of impious deeds[2].

With the attainment of this Samādhi, all the impressions of "I", "Me" and "Mine" are destroyed. All the actions, bad or good are destroyed and as a result, the knowledge that 'I am verily Brahman', which is received indirectly from the preceptor is experienced directly. Like the midday sun, the knowledge destroys the darkness of ignorance, which is the cause of duality.

Samādhi and deep sleep

Deep sleep, because of its apparent similarity often appears like Samādhi. In both the states, the modifications of mind (चित्तवृत्ति) do not appear. But, in Samādhi they exist without appearance whereas in the deep sleep they do not exist and are merged in their cause i.e. ignorance[3].

Obstacles of Samādhi

There are four hurdles on the way of Samādhi viz. Laya, Vikṣepa, Kaṣāya and Rasāsvāda. Laya is torpidity. When the mind, for some reason or other, is unable to

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1. यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता।
   योगिनो यतचित्तस्य.....। (Gītā, 6.19)
2. धर्ममेघमिमं प्राहुः, समाधिं योगवित्तमाः।
   वर्षत्येष यतो धर्मामृतधाराः सहस्रशः।। (P.D., 1.60)
3. निर्विकल्पकस्तु ज्ञातृज्ञानादिविकल्पलयापेक्षयाद्वितीयवस्तुनि तदाकाराकारिता-याश्चित्तवृत्तेः अतितरामेकीभावेनावस्थानम्। (Vedānta Sāra. 62)

rest on Brahman, it lapses into sleep. It is the result of laziness. Vikṣepa is distraction. When the mind fails to rest on Brahman, it is distracted and rests on some other object, and forgets to concentrate on the absolute. Kaṣāya is attachment. Even if there is absence of torpidity and distraction, the mind sometimes fails to rest on Brahman. Due to the impressions (वासना) of attachment (राग) etc, the mind experiences a numbness which obstructs it from concentrating on Brahman. Rasāsvāda is a unique kind of obstacle. When the aspirant is in Savikalpaka Samādhi, he derives immense pleasure out of it. As a result, his mind refuses to proceed further to attain Nirvikalpaka Samādhi, where the duality would be lost. The Yogī does not want to lose the pleasure and is rather afraid of the next step where he would lose his own identity. Gaudapada in his Kārikā effectively depicts the confusing state as follows:[1]

अस्पर्शयोगो वै नाम दुर्दर्शः सर्वयोगिभिः।

योगिनो विभ्यति ह्यस्मादभये भयदर्शिनः।।

Although the absolute is called "Abhayam", the Yogī is scared to attain it because he derives endless pleasure in the present state i.e. Savikalpaka Samādhi and does not ever want to lose it although the present bliss is inferior to that of Nirvikalpa Samādhi. This unwarranted attachment is called the obstacle of Rasāsvāda.

Removal of the obstacles

When the mind confronts the obstacle of torpidity (लय), the aspirant is advised to rouse it, when it is distracted (विक्षेप), it should be brought back to calmness through perseverance and renunciation. When the mind is trapped by Kaṣāya, one should be aware of it and rescue the mind out of it. When the mind starts enjoying the bliss of Savikalpaka Samādhi, thereby feeling reluctant to

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1. Mdk. K. 3.39

proceed further, one should desist doing so and remain unattached through the practice of discrimination[1].

The Bird's Way

The alternative path of the mystic is the bird's way or the quicker one. It is a short route and may be said to be meant for advanced aspirants. Unlike the Yogic path, it is not a combination of physiological and psychological activities, but is purely psychological in nature. Like the Yogic way, it also stresses the need of a competent preceptor and a capable disciple.

The bird's way or the way of knowledge, as it is known widely, has mainly three phases[2], Śravaṇa (audition), Manana (contemplation) and Nididhyāsana (meditation), leading ultimately to the final state i.e. Samādhi.

The Audition (Śravaṇa)

The disciple is required to acquire a perfect knowledge of Brahman and his own identity with It. All the Vedāntic literature aims at convincing this truth to the listener. But the great sentences or the Mahāvākyas serve the purpose more than any other part of the literature. The listener, therefore, is advised to listen to the Mahāvākyas from the mouth of the preceptor and analyse the meaning thereof, in order to understand and realise

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1. लये सम्बोधयेच्चित्तं विक्षिप्तं शमयेत्पुनः।
   सकषायं विजानीयात् समप्राप्तं न चालयेत्।। (Mdk. K., 3.44)
   यदा न लीयते चित्तं न च विक्षिप्यते पुनः।
   अनिङ्गनमनाभासं निष्पन्नं ब्रह्म तत्तदा।। (Mdk.K., 3.46)
2. आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः। (Br. Up., 4.5.6)

the true meaning of them. It is pertinent, in the present context, to discuss a bit about the great sentences.

The Great Sentences (Mahāvākyas):-

In spite of a little controversy about the number of the great sentences, they are widely accepted as four. Below is a little discussion about each of them.

Prajñānaṁ Brahma (प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म)

This great sentence, which belongs to Aitareya Upaniṣad means "Consciousness is Brahman". Consciousness is that faculty by which one sees, hears, tastes, smells and experiences. Everything is pervaded with consciousness, right from Brahmā (the creator), Indra, to the lowest species of animals, not excluding the five elements like ether etc.

The aspirant has to conceive that the consciousness which is Brahman and is present in everything is equally present in him. Hence he is no other than Brahman[1].

Ayamātmā Brahma (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म)

This great sentence (meaning this Ātmā is Brahman) which belongs to the great Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad has three parts in it viz. Ayam (this), Ātmā (Self) and Brahman. The word Ayam signifies that the entity is direct and self effulgent. It is the conscious principle which has its base on the Ahaṁkāra, the vital force (Prāṇa), the mind, the senses and the body, yet is beyond them, and is the

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1. येनेक्षते श्रृणोतीदं जिघ्रति व्याकरोति च।
स्वाद्वस्वादू विजानाति तत्प्रज्ञानमुदीरितम्।। (P.D., 5.1)
चतुर्मुखेन्द्रदेवेषु मनुष्याश्वगवादिषु।
चैतन्यमेकं ब्रह्मातः प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्ममय्यपि।। (P.D., 5.2)

witness. This very self is nothing other than the self-effulgent, self-sufficient Brahman[1].

Tattvamasi (तत्त्वमसि)

The great sentence "Tattvamasi" (That Thou art) belongs to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. The meaning of the sentence, which signifies the identity of Jīva and Brahman, is derived by virtue of three relations of the terms. They are Sāmānādhikaraṇya, Viśeṣaṇaviśeṣ yabhāva and Lakṣyalaksaṇābhāva[2].

The relationship between two words having the same locus is called Sāmānādhikaraṇya. For example in the statement. "This is that Devadatt"; the word "that" signifies the Devadatta, associated with the past and "This" signifies the Devadatta, associated with the present. Similarly, in the sentence "Tattvamasi", the word "Tat" signifies consciousness, characterised by remoteness (Parokṣa) and "Tvam" signifies consciousness characterised by immediacy (Pratyakṣa). Both the words refer to the same conscious Brahman.

The second relation is the Viśeṣaṇaviśeṣyabhāva. In the ṣentence "This is that Devadatta", "that" stands for Devadatta, existing in the past and "this" stands for "Devadatt" existing in the present. Although they are contrary ideas, yet they qualify each other so as to signify a common object.

The third relation is Lakṣyalakṣaṇābhāva. Lakṣanā (implication) is of three kinds: Jahallakṣaṇā, Ajahallakṣ anā and Jahadajahallakṣanā. In the present context,

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1. दृश्यमानस्य सर्वस्य जगतस्तत्त्वमीर्यते।
   ब्रह्मशब्देन तद् ब्रह्म स्वप्रकाशात्मरूपकम्।। (P.D., 5.8)
2. Naiṣkarmyasiddhi, 3.3

Lakṣaṇā is unavoidable to derive the meaning of the sentence for the following reasons.

The great sentence "Tattvamasi" (That Thou Art) does not reveal its meaning directly like "The blue lotus" (नीलमुत्पलम्). In this statement, the words "blue" and "lotus" both exclude other colours and other objects respectively. But in the sentence "That Thou Art", 'that' is the consciousness associated with remoteness (Paroksa) etc. 'Thou' is the consciousness, associated with immediacy etc. Being contrary ideas, they cannot be qualifier and qualified through a direct meaning (वाच्यार्थ). Therefore, implication (लक्षणा) is a must to derive the actual meaning of the great sentence.

Among the three kinds of Lakṣanās (implications) again, the Jahallakṣaṇā is not sufficient to derive the meaning of the great sentence. Because in the Jahallakṣaṇā, one part of the sentence is discarded in order to get the indirect meaning. For example, the direct meaning of the sentence "Gangāyāṁ ghosah" is that "cowherds' village is on the river Gangā", which is unthinkable. Here the word Gangā discards its direct meaning and implies "the bank" thereby conveying the meaning that "the cowherds' village is on the bank of Gangā". But in the sentence "That Thou Art" the real meaning cannot be derived by the help of this Lakṣanā, because neither the word "Tat" nor the word "Tvam" discard its meaning to imply the other.

Ajahallakṣaṇā is one where the implied meaning is hinted without discarding the direct meaning. For example, in the sentence "Śoṇo Dhāvati" (the red is running), the word "red" does not discard its meaning but hints at the implied meaning of "a red coloured horse". But this Lakṣaṇā is not sufficient to derive the meaning as the qualities of remoteness and immediacy (of Tat and

Tvam, respectively) are contradictory to each other. Hence, it is impossible to get the meaning without discarding any part of it.

In the Jahadajahallakṣaṇā, one part of the sentence discards the direct meaning, whereas the other part retains it. For example, in the sentence "This is that Devadatta", the association of time and place with "This" and "That" are eliminated from the sentence but the person called Devadatta retains its meaning. So also in the great sentence "That Thou Art", the contradictory factors of remoteness and immediacy, omniscience and partially learned etc. are discarded and the pure consciousness, common to both "Tat" and "Tvam" is retained[1].

Aham Brahmāsmi (अहं ब्रह्मास्मि)

The great sentence "Aham Brahmāsmi", which belongs to the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, is an experience sentence. After the real understanding of the great sentence "Tattvamasi", the superimposition is removed. There arises a state of Absolute Oneness, in which the Yogī feels that he is eternal, pure, self-illumined, free, real, supremely blissful, infinite and one without a second. That very mental state, illumined by the reflection of pure consciousness, objectifies the Supreme Brahman, which is identical with the individual self, but is so far unknown. It destroys the ignorance about Brahman. With the destruction of ignorance, all the effects of ignorance are destroyed. The mental state (of Absolute Oneness) which forms a part of those effects is also destroyed. On the destruction of this state of Absolute Oneness, there remains only the Supreme Brahman, just as the face remains after the removal of the mirror[2].

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1. Vedāntasāra. 50-57
2. Vedāntasāra. 58-59

The six Methods (Liñgas) of Audition

The truth of Vedānta, that the aspirant is the non-dual Brahman is imparted and established through six methods viz. Upakrama and Upasaṁhāra, Abhyāsa, Apūrvatā, Phala, Arthavāda and Upapatti.

i. Upakrama and Upasaṁhāra (Introduction and Conclusion)

The presentation of a subject at the beginning and end is called Upakrama (beginning) and Upasaṁhāra (end). For example, the sixth chapter of Chāndogya Upaniṣad establishes Brahman as the one without a second. It is referred in the beginning as "Ekamevādvitīyam" and ends with "Etadātmyamidam Sarvam" (एतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वम्)

ii. Abhyāsa (Repetition)

Abhyāsa or repetition is the second method of Śravaṇa. The truth, which is intended to be established in the context, has to be repeated time and again throughout the text. For example, in the same section of the same Upaniṣad mentioned earlier, the word "Tat Tvam Asi" (That Thou Art) have been repeated as many as nine times.

iii. Apūrvatā (Uniqueness)

Apūrvatā is the truth that the very knowledge (of Brahman) is not acquirable through any other source of knowledge (but only through the Śrutis). In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Yājñavalkya is asked to teach about the Being who is known only through the Upaniṣads[1].

iv. Phala (Result)

Phala is the result or the necessity of the text taught. The mention of the same is unavoidable to motivate the

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1. औपनिषदं पुरुषं पृच्छामि। (Br.Up., 3.9.26)

aspirant. For example, Muṇḍaka declares that a person who knows Brahman verily becomes Brahman[1] and Chāndogya also reveals that the knower of Brahman goes beyond grief[2].

v. Arthavāda (Eulogy)

Atharvāda is the eulogy of the fact taught in the context. It manifolds the importance of the subject as well as enhances interest in the listener. For example, Uddālaka, in order to arouse immense interest in his son asks him if he knows the principle by knowing which all the unknown is known, inaudible is heard and the unthinkable is thought[3]. As a result, his interest is arrested and the instruction is easy.

vi. Upapatti (Supporting activities)

Upapatti is the argument forwarded in support of the subject matter, intended to be established. Demonstrations and analogies are included in this category. It makes the difficult ideas comprehensible. For instance while instructing the all-pervasiveness of Brahman, Uddālaka says that when earth is recognised, the presence of earth is recognised in everything that is made of earth, so also by recognising Brahman, Its presence is recognised everywhere because everything is Brahman. All the apparent differences and diversities are due to the different names and forms they are wrapped with. This

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1. स यो ह वै तत् परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति। (Mnd. Up., 3.2.9)
2. तरति शोकमात्मवित्। (Ch.Up., 7.1.3)
3. येनाश्रुतं श्रुतं भवत्यमतं मतमविज्ञातं विज्ञातमिति। (Ch. Up., 6.1.3)

analogy makes the abstract and incomprehensible idea easily comprehensible to the mind of the disciple[1].

By the methods mentioned above, the listener disciple acquires the knowledge of Brahman and his absolute identity with It.

Manana (Contemplation)

The next step, which surpasses the audition in gravity and importance is the act of Manana or contemplation. Contemplation is an extremely important stage during the spiritual progress of an aspirant. It has been rightly valued to be hundred times more important than audition[2].

Hearing the words of the preceptor generates no result, unless and until it is translated into action. Contemplating on the words of the teacher is the initial step. Knowing the nature of Brahman, the wise should contemplate on it, not engage himself in delivering futile lectures or discourses, which are meaningless or tiring of words[3].

After hearing and understanding the maxims of Vedānta, the aspirant gains the primary knowledge that the identity of his individual soul and Brahman is not an impossibility. In order to establish the identity, he has to reflect the same incessantly in his mind. This vehement and continuous deep thinking is called Manana. Says Sadananda:

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1. यथा सोम्यैकेन मृत्पिण्डेन सर्वं मृन्मयं विज्ञातं स्याद् वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयम्। (Ch. Up., 6.1.4)
2. श्रुतेः शतगुणं विद्यान्मननं मननादपि।
   निदिध्यासं लक्षगुणमनन्तं निर्विकल्पकम्।। (Vivekcuḍamaṇi. 364)
3. तमेव धीरो विज्ञाय प्रज्ञां कुर्वीत ब्राह्मणः.... (Br. Up., 4.4.21)

"मननं तु श्रुतस्याद्वितीयवस्तुनो वेदान्तानुगुण-युक्तिभिरनवरत-मनुचिन्तनम्"[1].

According to Vidyaranyamuni, analysing the advice of the preceptor through logical reasoning to arrive at the possibility of its validity is the act of Manana[2].

It shows that, although the words of the preceptor are to be received with faith and reverence as authentic, they have to be analysed in one's own mind, instead of a dogmatic approach.

Nididhyāsana (Meditation)

When, not even a speck of doubt remains about the identity of the individual self with Brahman, the aspirant meditates on this truth and nothing else. This deep absorption in the Brahman as one's own self is called the Nididhyāsana[3].

This meditation culminates in the Samādhi discussed earlier. Hence, both the ways (the ant's way and the bird's way), come to the one and the same end at last.

There is no strictness of rule about following one path or the other. Competence is the only criterion. If a person has an extremely concentrated and purified mind, he can attain the goal only by the practice of Rājayoga[4].

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1. Vedāntasāra. 61
2. युक्त्या सम्भावितत्वानुसन्धानं मननन्तु तत्। (P.D., 1.53)
3. ताभ्यां निर्विचिकित्सेऽर्थे चेतसः स्थापितस्य यत्।
   एकतानत्वमेतद्धि निदिध्यासनमुच्यते।। (P.D., 1.54)
4. परिपक्वं मनो येषां केवलोऽयं च सिद्धिदः।
   गुरुदैवतभक्तानां सर्वेषां सुलभो जवात्।। (Aparoksānubhūti 144)

4

Liberation: The Mystic Realisation

After traversing a long way on a razor-like arduous path[1], the mystic at last lands on the land of his goal, the ultimate end of his journey, the liberation, the Mokṣa. Various physical, mental and spiritual endevours contribute ultimately to the supreme bliss, the immortality.

Ignorance, the cause

The individual being, as discussed earlier, identifies himself with a puny entity and is moved by the ephemeral sorrows and happiness of the world, due to ignorance. Ignorance makes him rotate in the whirlpool of birth and death making him forget his own identity. Just as a man, treading over a mine of gold every day, if unaware of the same, does not acquire it, so also, the individual self enters into his own immortal self everyday, during the dreamless deep sleep (Suṣupti). But due to ignorance, he is unable to attain it[2].

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1. क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया। (Kth. Up,. 1.3.14)
2. अहरहर्गच्छन्त्य एतं ब्रह्मलोकं न विन्दन्त्यनृतेन हि प्रत्यूढ़ाः। (Ch. Up. 8.3.2)

Ignorance is the bondage that binds man to the mortal world. The heart is the ground of all bondages, otherwise called knots (granthis) in the Upaniṣadic parlance[1]. Their untying leads to liberation[2].

The knots of the heart have a physical as well as psychological existence. According to Barāhopaniṣad, there exist three knots in the heart viz. The knot of Brahmā (ब्रह्मग्रन्थि), the knot of Viṣṇu (विष्णुग्रन्थि) and the knot of Rudra (रुद्रग्रन्थि). When they are pierced by the ascending Kuṇḍalinī, one is free from bondage[3]. Psychologically, the Brahmā, Visṇu and Rudra granthi are identified with the knots of ignorance (Avidyā), desire (Kāma) and action (Karma)[4], which are the tensions of the conscious and sub-conscious mind[5].

According to Vidyaranya Swami, bondage (Bandha) is of two kinds viz. acute and mild. The demon qualities (Āsuri sampat) are the acute kinds of bondage, since they are direct causes of sufferings. But, experiencing duality in the world (which is not the real nature of the world, because the world is nothing but Brahman) is the mild bondage, because it generates the demon qualities, which ultimately lead to sorrow[6].

Knowledge

Ignorance being the cause of bondage, knowledge, naturally is the cause of freedom. The true concept of

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1. सोऽविद्याग्रन्थिं विकिरतीह सोम्य! (Mnd. Up., 2.1.10)
   भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशया:। (Mnd.Up., 2.2.8)
2. Ibid.
3. ब्रह्मग्रन्थिं ततो भित्त्वा विष्णुग्रन्थिं भिनत्त्यसौ। (B.Up., 4.65)
4. Krishnananda : Māṇḍūkyopanisad, An Exposition. P.34
5. Ibid.
6. Jīvanamuktiviveka. 2, P .213

knowledge has been beautifully expressed in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad in the story of Nārada. The great seer was well-versed in the four Vedas, the epics, the grammar, mathematics, the science of portents, the science of time, logic, ethics, politics, the science of gods, science of sacred knowledge, weapons, serpents and fine arts. But, with all his learning, unable to conquer sorrow, he approached Sanatkumār for relief. Having learnt about his vast wisdom, the sage pronounced it (the wisdom) as mere name and held it to be miserably insufficient to vanquish his sorrow[1]. Despite its importance, all the knowledge of the world does not suffice to liberate the self, to give it eternal happiness. Only the knowledge of Brahman is the true knowledge, which gives eternal bliss and repels sorrow and delusion.

With the removal of sorrow and delusion, the action and transmigration are removed. Because it is the conclusion of the great seers that there cannot be any action or birth in the absence of grief and delusion[2].

Knowledge (of Brahman) again in the Upaniṣadic parlance does not mean "to know" merely but has a much deeper significance than that. "To know" (Brahman) in fact means a realisation, a total transformation of the personality. The knowledge of Brahman, for easy comprehension, has been categorised as indirect and direct[3]. To know the existence of Brahman is indirect knowledge, whereas one's identification with Brahman by

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1. Ch. Up. 7.1.1-5
2. यदद्वयं ज्ञानमतीव निर्मलं महात्मनां तत्र न शोकमोहता।
   तयोरभावे नहि कर्म जन्म वा भवेदयं वेदविदां विनिश्चय:।। (Up. Sāhasrī, 10.12)
3. परोक्षा चापरोक्षेति विद्या द्वेधा विचारजा। (P.D., 6.15)

eradicating one's previous identification with the impure mortal body is the direct knowledge[1].

To make it clearer, the comparison of Jīva with the oblivious prince is pertinent, which goes like this: A prince, abducted by a cowherd was brought up in a rustic society, and identifying himself to be a helpless cowherd behaved accordingly. When by chance, he was acquainted to his royal origin, he realised his own nature and became a real prince, which, he was all through[2].

The individual being, likewise, goes on identifying himself with the mortal body with limited capabilities and powers. He feels happy and unhappy with the corporeal comforts and discomforts, he receives. He feels sorry or delighted with the wellbeing and misfortune of his wife or son or relatives. He takes himself to be a puny helpless creature, which is not his real nature but a superimposition. But with the dawning of knowledge, the misconception vanishes which finally results in his emancipation. He feels, he is not the body, which is nothing but a conglomeration of five elements, which is mortal and impure. He feels he is the Brahman, which is immortal and pure. The body consists of parts whereas the Ātman is devoid of parts. Ātman is eternal whereas body is transient. Just as an actor, having decorated himself as a woman does not really become a woman and wish a husband (womanhood not being his own nature), so also by acquiring a body, the Ātman does not become the body but remains separate from it, and in fact is a

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1. अस्ति ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद परोक्षज्ञानमेव तत्।
   अहं ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद साक्षात्कार: स उच्यते।। (P.D., 6.16)
2. राजसूनो: स्मृतिप्राप्तौ व्याधभावो निवर्तते।
   तथैवमात्मनो ज्ञस्य तत्त्वमस्यादिवाक्यत:।।
   (Qt. Radhakrishnan: Indian Philosophy. P.596).

witness[1]. The individual feels he is the Ātman, which is self-effulgent, quiet and equanimous. He is the Ātman that is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. He is unsubjectual to disease (Nirāmaya) or alteration (Nirvikalpa). He is unlimited, holy, immovable and undecaying. He experiences the Brahman, who resides in his body but is absolutely distinct from it. Not only the gross body, but also the subtle body (which consists of the sense organs, five organs of action, five vital forces, mind and intellect) is different from the Ātman.

He understands that his individual entity is not different from the Consciousness Absolute, but is the same. Consciousness is indivisible. Hence Jīva is not a part of Brahman but the same, although it appears different. He feels every object to be nothing but Brahman. All the names, forms and activities are nothing but Brahman.

The world, after being perceived as Brahman, loses its entity as world just as an earthen pot, after being understood as earth loses its separate entity as pot[2]. The appearance of the world is due to the ignorance of the Ātman. Just as the ignorance of the rope makes the snake appear and the knowledge of the same makes it disappear, so also the knowledge of Ātman makes the world disappear (If somebody mistakes a rope to be a snake, it remains a snake for him so long as he does not recognise the rope as a rope)[3]. The whole universe appears to the liberated as a mere illusion in the Ātman just as the blue colour is an illusion in the sky or water (mirage) is an

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1. Śataślokī. 7.
2. यथा मृदि घटो नाम कनके कुण्डलाभिधा।
   शुक्तौ हि रजतख्यातिर्जीवशब्दस्तथा परे।। (Aparokṣānubhūti, 60)
3. Aṣṭāvakrasaṁhitā. 2.7

illusion in a desert. The separate entity of world becomes unreal for him like a castle in the air or the second moon in the sky[1]. He understands that he has always been pure (being the same as the Brahman) although was appearing impure due to his own ignorance. With the dawn of this supreme knowledge of Brahman, he is liberated.

Process of Liberation

Liberation may be called a process of merger of effects in the causes, or a movement, reverse to the evolution. In the process of liberation, the speech gets merged in the mind, the mind in the vital force, the vital force in the light (Tejas) and the light in the Ultimate Reality, where the individual self loses its identity[2]. Splendid analogies are presented in the Upaniṣads to describe the loss of individual identity in the vastness of Brahman. As the honies of several flowers, collected and put together in the honey-comb do not differentiate themselves from each other, just as rivers from the east and the west merge in the ocean never separate themselves, just as the sounds of a conch or lute do not realise their differences from each other, so also the individual soul loses its tiny entity in the infinity and finds itself no way different from it[3]. A similar view has been expressed by Eckhart:

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1. यथैव व्योम्नि नीलत्वं यथा नीरं मरुस्थले।
   पुरुषत्वं यथा स्थाणौ तद्वद्विश्वं चिदात्मनि।। (Aparokṣānubhūti, 61)
   यथैव शून्ये वेतालो गन्धर्वाणां पुरं यथा।
   यथाकाशे द्विचन्द्रत्वं तद्वत् सत्ये जगत्स्थितिः।। (Aparokṣānubhūti, 62)
2. अथ यदास्यवाङ्मनसि सम्पद्यते मनः प्राणे प्राणस्तेजसि तेजः परस्यां देवतायामथ न जानाति। (Ch. Up., 6.15.2)
3. Ibid

"When the soul beholds God purely, it takes all its being and its life and whatever it is from the depth of God; yet it knows no knowing, no loving or anything else whatsoever. It rests utterly and completely within the being of God, and knows nothing but only to be with God. So soon as it becomes conscious that it sees and loves and knows God, that is in itself a departure"[1].

Liberation is a movement from the finite to infinity. Liberation is the attainment of plenum (Bhūmā)[2], where there is no duality, where there is no scope to listen, to see, to know something other than one's own self[3]. The opposite, where there is possibility of listening, seeing or knowing something else, is limited and is mortality[4]. When everything turns out to be Brahman, who can see, hear or know by what[5]. Here a mother ceases to be a mother, a father ceases to be a father, a killer is no killer, a monk is no monk, a hermit no hermit[6]. Just as pure water, mixed with pure water becomes one, non-differentiate, so also the self, stripped of all dualities becomes one with the Supreme Reality[7]. Just as rivers, leaving aside their names and forms, merge in the ocean, so also, the individual self, free from all conceptions of names and forms merge in the one and the only Reality[8].

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1. Otto: Mysticism, East and West. P. 134
2. भूमा त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्य इति। (Ch. Up.,7.23.1)
3. यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यत् शृणोति नान्यद् विजानाति स भूमा। (Ch Up., 7.24.1)
4. यत्रान्यत्पश्यति अन्यत् शृणोति अन्यद् विजानाति तदल्पम्। (Ch.Up., 7.24.1)
5. यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत् केन कं पश्येत् (Br. Up., 4.5.15)
6. Ibid. 4.3.22
7. Kth. Up. 2.1.15.
8. यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय।

The analogy should not lead to an inference that liberation is a real merger of the individual self in the Universal one. It is only a discovery of one's already existing oneness with the same. Liberation is not a product, produced at a particular point of time and place. Being unanimously and universally accepted as eternal[1], liberation has to be a non-product, since all the products, found in the yonder world are doomed to perish. Sankara makes it very clear by holding that liberation is not a substance, generated (उत्पाद्य), changed (विकार्य), acquired (आप्य) or modified (संस्कार्य)[2].

Liberation, therefore, is not the outcome of the knowledge of Brahman, but the knowledge in itself is liberation. It is the knowledge that he was never fettered at all, that he was free all the while. Or, to express in the beautiful words of the Upaniṣad, "the free is set free again"[3].

The rigorous efforts, severe austerity, pain and strain are for nothing but to realise, to discover that he is the same Brahman. It is like the discovery of the tenth person, feared drowned in the river[4].

तथा विद्वान् नामरूपाद् विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम्।। (Mnd. Up., 3.2.8)

1. नित्यश्च मोक्षः सर्वैर्मोक्षवादिभिरभ्युपगम्यते। (B.S.S.B., 1.1.4)
2. Ibid.
3. विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते। (Kth. Up., 2.2.1)
4. The story is like this: Once ten persons crossed a river. To be sure none was drowned, they counted the heads. Every time the enumertor counted other nine and excluded himself. As a result the tenth one was found missing. Fearing one was drowned, they started crying. On hearing it, a passer by came and counted them and the tenth person was discovered to be the same who was counting.

Stages of Liberation

Although no explicit categorisation of the stages or kinds of liberation is found in the Upaniṣads, it can be broadly put under three stages viz. the gradual liberation (क्रममुक्ति), the liberation with body (जीवन्मुक्ति) and liberation after the body (विदेहमुक्ति).

The first stage or the Kramamukti has been frequently referred to by Upaniṣads as the attainment of Brahmaloka[1]. It is mainly a product of meditation, especially of the Om. According to Sankara; Upāsanās (meditations) of Brahman (abundantly advised in the Upaniṣads) are meant for three results. Some of them lead to material prosperity (अभ्युदयार्थानि), some for betterment of ritualistic performance (कर्मसमृद्ध्यर्थानि) and some are meant for the gradual liberation (क्रममुक्त्यर्थानि)[2]. The individual soul, by purifying the mind through meditation attains the Brahmaloka. Remaining there for a fairly lengthy period, gradually he becomes liberated without ever coming back to the mortal world[3].

Jīvanmukti is that stage of liberation where the individual self realises its identity with Brahman and is liberated from the fetters of sorrows and miseries, but still sustains the burden of the body for the endurance of the results of previous actions through it. Although liberated,

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1. ब्रह्मलोके महीयते। (Kth. Up., 1.2.17)
2. तत्र कानिचिद् ब्रह्मणः उपासनान्यभ्युदयार्थानि कानिचित् क्रममुक्त्यर्थानि कानिचित् कर्मसमृद्ध्यर्थानि। (B.S.S.B., 1.1.11)
3. निर्गुणोपास्तिसामर्थ्यात् तत्र तत्त्वमवेक्षते।
   पुनरावर्तते नायं कल्पान्ते च विमुच्यते।। (P.D., 9.146)

the individual is still captivated in the body, awaiting the normal fall of the same[1].

Videhamukti is the final stage of liberation, where the liberated (Jīvanmukta) becomes one with Brahman, at the normal fall of his mortal body, after enduring the fruits of his past deeds (प्रारब्ध).

Prārabdha Karma

Karma is a technical word, meaning the actions done by an individual during his span of life. Individual being, who is the designer of his own destiny determines his life as a result of his own actions. His birth, longevity, sorrows and happiness, all depend upon the works that he has performed in the previous lives.[2]

Actions, divided on a temporal basis, fall under three categories viz. actions being performed (क्रियमाण), actions deposited (सञ्चित) and actions fruiting (प्रारब्ध). The first category stands for the actions done by individual in the present birth, whereas the second category means the old actions, performed in previous births and stored for results. The third category i.e. the Prārabdha, is the most important one, which is a collection of old actions, which has started fruiting and is the cause of the present birth and the fate that the individual is going to endure.

With the dawning of the supreme knowledge, all the Sañcita and Kriyamāṇa actions of a person are destroyed like faggots, burnt into ashes by a blazing fire[3]. Like a

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1. तस्य तावदेव चिरं यावन्न विमोक्षेऽथ सम्पत्स्ये। (Ch. Up.,6.14.2)
2. सति मूले तद्विपाको जात्यायुर्भोगा:। (Y.S., 2.13)
3. यथैधांसि समिद्धोऽग्निर्भस्मसात् कुरुतेऽर्जुन।
   ज्ञानाग्नि: सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा।। (Gītā, 4.37)

lotus-leaf in the water, he is no more attached or affected by the bad or good deeds that he had performed earlier[1] except the Prārabdha.

Prārabdha is like a darted arrow, released from the bow to hit the target. No amount of strife is sufficient to draw it back. "Prārabdha", according to Vidyaranya Muni "is like the injury made by the tenth person on his own head while beating in lamentation at the imaginary disappearance of the tenth person (story narrated earlier). When he realises himself to be the same lost person, his grief disappears but the injury does not heal up immediately. It takes its own time to recover. As the tenth person has to take medicine for the recovery, so also the liberated person has to exhaust his Prārabdha actions by endurance[2]. The endurance of its results is the only means to its cessation, its destruction being impossible otherwise[3].

Prārabdha can be categoarised into three kinds viz, volitional, involitioal and imposed (Ichhā, Anichhā and Parechhā[4]), according to their causes. The Prārabdha, done deliberately despite the knowledge of its sinful nature like consuming forbidden food (like beef etc.) is called volitional (Ichhā Prārābdha). When an action is done, as if forcibly by an internal urge in spite of the resistance of one's conscience, is called the involitional

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1. यथा पुष्करपलाश आपो न श्लिष्यन्त एवमेवंविदि पापं कर्म न श्लिष्यते। (Ch. Up., 4.14.3)
2. दशमोऽपि शिरस्ताडं रुदन् बुद्धवा न रोदिति। शिरोव्रणस्तु मासेन शनैः शाम्यति नो तदा।। (P.D.,7.247)
   शमयत्यौषधेनायं दशमः स्वं व्रणं यथा।
   भोगेन शमयित्वैतत् प्रारब्धं मुच्यते तदा।। (P.D., 7.250)
3. तदश्नुते नास्ति कृतस्य नाशः। (M.B., 3.138.38)
4. इच्छानिच्छापरेच्छा च प्रारब्धं त्रिविधं स्मृतम्। (P.D., 7.152)

(Anichhā) Prārabdha. Asked by Arjuna, why people almost unwillingly perpetrate a sin, as if being forced to do so, Lord Kṛṣṇa hints towards the non-volitional Prārabdha and holds the internal enemies like Kāma responsible for such commitments[1]. Parechhā (imposed) Prārabdha is done neither intentionally nor due to internal force but for the wellbeing of others, due to philanthropy[2].

The ignorant and wise are alike in enduring the fruits of Prārabdha. But, the wise lessens his pain by fortitude, whereas the ignorant enhances it due to lack of patience[3]. It is like two travellers, aiming at a remote distance. One, knowing the length of the distance, covers it quickly with patience. And the other, knowing the same, feels miserable and helpless[4].

Characteristics of a Liberated Man

Although liberation is nothing new, it metamorphoses the whole being of a person. In addition to his realisation as Brahman and being free from the thraldom of his deeds, following are a few characteristics of a liberated man.

i. Identity with Everything

The liberated man, not only identifies himself with Brahman, but everything for him, turns out to be

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1. काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः। (Gītā, 3.37)
2. नानिच्छन्तो न चेच्छंन्तः परदाक्षिण्यसंयुताः।
   सुखदुःखे भजन्त्येतत् परेच्छापूर्वकर्म हि।। (P.D., 7.162)
3. ज्ञानिनोऽज्ञानिनश्चात्र समे प्रारब्धकर्मणी।
   न क्लेशो ज्ञानिनो धैर्यान्मूढः क्लिश्यत्यधैर्यतः।। (P.D., 7.133)
4. मार्गे गन्त्रोर्द्वयोः श्रान्तौ समायामप्यदूरताम्।
   जानन् धैर्याद् द्रुतं गच्छेदन्यस्तिष्ठति दीनधीः।। (P.D., 7.134)

Brahman. He identifies himself with everything and everything with himself[1]. He transcends the difference between subject and object, as he is identified with both. He identifies himself simultaneously with the food and the eater[2]. He feels, he is the first-born Hiraṇyagarbha[3], he is the seer of verses and also the god that resides in the sun[4].

The liberated finds himself pervaded in the front, in the back, above and below, everywhere throughout the world[5]. He feels that the space is his body[6]. He understands that the world is pervaded by him just as sugarcane is pervaded by sweetness[7]. He feels that the world has come out of him and will merge in him just as pot merges in earth, ripples in water and bangle in gold[8]. The great lady seer Vāk felt that her sublime head could touch the heaven, that she inhabited in the water of the ocean and both the spheres; earth and heaven. She could blow like the air and could reach everywhere[9].

The liberated realises his perfect harmony with the rest of the world. Says Rabindranath, "When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison

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1. Is. Up.6.
2. अहमन्नमहमन्नमहमन्नम्। अहमन्नादोऽहमन्नादोऽहमन्नादः। (T.Up., 3.10.3)
3. T.Up. 3.10.5
4. Is. Up. 16
5. Up. Sāhasrī. 10.2
6. T.Up. 1.6.2
7. यथैवेक्षुरसे क्लृप्ता तेन व्याप्तैव शर्करा।
   तथा विश्वं मयि क्लृप्तं मया व्याप्तं निरन्तरम्।। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 2.6)
8. मत्तो विनिर्गतं विश्वं मय्येव लयमेष्यति।
   मृदि कुम्भो जले वीचिः कनके कटकं यथा।। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 2.10)
9. अहं सुवेपितरमस्य मूर्धन्ममयोनिरप्स्वन्तः समुद्रे। ततो वितिष्ठे भुवनानुविश्वोतामूद्यां वर्ष्मणोपस्पृशामि। (Rgveda. 10.125.7)

house, whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with all is established"[1].

ii. Loses Sorrow and Delusion

After attaining liberation, the emancipated crosses all his sorrows and miseries[2]. Nārada approached the sage Sanatkumār to be liberated from the sorrow that he used to feel. The mundane sorrows are caused by the longings of the worldly enjoyments. The liberated ceases to long for the ephemeral mundane enjoyments. He conquers all his desires[3] and reaches a state where all his desires vanish[4]. In him, all desires merge like rivers in the ocean[5].

He, who sees oneness has no delusion (Moha)[6] either. According to Sankara, Moha is the delusion or the veiling of the Reality (Āvaraṇa) and Śoka (sorrow) is the sadness caused by the distraction in the manifestation[7], both being the characteristic of Māyā. When the same is withdrawn there is no cause of sorrows or delusions, to the seer of unity.

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1. Sādhanā. P.8.
2. तरति शोकम् (Mnd. Up., 3.2.9) तरति शोकमात्मवित् (Ch. Up., 7.1.3)
3. जयते तांश्च कामान्। (Mnd.Up., 3.1.10)
4. इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामा:। (Mnd. Up., 3.2.2)
5. .....समुद्रमाप: प्रविशन्ति यद्वत्.....तद्वत् कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे.....। (Gītā, 2.70)
6. यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद् विजानत:। तत्र को मोह:। (Is. Up., 7)
7. Is. Up. S.B. 7

iii. Bustles with Bliss

Liberation is not only cessation of sorrow but also an abundance of tremendous bliss. The paramount joy and happiness, that the liberated experiences, has no bound, no measure and is eternal[1]. Yet a linear idea has been presented in the Upaniṣads to express the vastness of bliss.

A person, who is in his youth, good in nature, well-versed, active with steady mind and strong body, with the whole earth full of wealth in his possession enjoys one human bliss. A hundred times human bliss is equal to one Manuṣya Gandharva bliss. Hundred such bliss equal to one divine fairy bliss. Hundred times such bliss again, equals to a bliss of Pitṛloka. Likewise, the bliss of gods, of Indra, of Bṛhaspati, of Prajāpati and that of Brahmā, all are hundred times more than their former bliss. But, he who realizes the oneness with Brahman, enjoys a bliss which surpasses the bliss of Brahmā[2]. The whole universe survives depending upon a tiny unit of that vast happiness[3].

The knower of Brahman is drowned in immeasurable happiness, knows nothing outside or inside, except his unity with Brahman, Just as a man, while embraced by his beloved wife, is oblivious of any outward or inward knowledge[4].

Of course, the comparison of the sensuous pleasure with the Supreme bliss should not mislead to a conclusion that the former is on a par with the later. In fact none of

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1. तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम्। (Kth. Up., 2.2.12)
   तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्। (Kth. Up., 2.2.13)
2. T.Up., 2.8.1-5
3. Br.Up., 4.3.32
4. तद्यथा प्रियया स्त्रिया सम्परिष्वक्तो न बाह्यं किंचन वेद नान्तरमेव। (Br. Up., 4.3.21)

the worldly pleasures is comparable to the pleasure of Brahman. The tiny, short lived, worldly pleasure may be regarded as a puny replica of the vast, unlimited, ineffable pleasure of Brahman. There is in fact no pleasure in Brahman. But the non-dual Brahman Itself is pleasure[1].

iv. Desireless

The liberated soul, having attained liberation becomes satisfied[2] and is free from all desires. The realisation of Brahman is the final end of acquirement whence there is no further gain, no further craving[3].

Desires, according to Bṛahadāraṇyaka are three viz. desires for wealth, child and fame (वित्तैषणा, पुत्रैषणा, and लोकैषणा)[4]. According to Vidyaranya, desire is first divided into two categories viz. pure (शुद्ध) desire and impure (मलिन) desire. Impure desire has been further divided into three categories viz. desire for fame, desire for knowledge and desire of the body. The desire to be praised and not to be blamed is called the desire for fame. The desire to acquire more and more bookish knowledge (not the knowledge of Brahman) is the second kind of desire. The desire to accumulate more and more comforts for the body is the third kind of desire.

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1. मास्त्वद्वैते सुख:...(P.D., 11.23)
   सुखमद्वैतमेव हि (Ibid)
2. ज्ञानतृप्ता:। (Mnd.Up., 3.2.5)
3. यल्लाभान्नापरो लाभ: (Ātmabodha, 1.54)
4. 4.4.22

These three desires (impure desires) are the causes of birth and death (whereas the pure desire or Śuddha Vāsanā is the cause of their destruction)[1].

All the desires at the attainment of liberation dissolve[2]. On attaining liberation, he becomes desireless (अकाम), free from desire (निष्काम) and his desires fulfilled (आप्तकाम). When everything becomes Brahman, why should one, desiring what, torture his body[3].

v. Fearless

Brahman, as discussed earlier, has been synonymised with fearlessness[4]. The liberated man, therefore, is free from all fears, is scared of none and never[5]. There is no presence of fear in him since it is always caused by an outward entity. Where there is no presence of anything other than his own self, the question of fear does not arise. He is free from the greatest fear, the fear of death. The Gītā vouches that even a little progress on this path releases man from a great fear[6]. What to speak of him who has reached the destiny.

vi. Bustles with Self Confidence

The liberated, at this highest stage, is filled with self-confidence and self-eulogy. On being emancipated, Triśañku declared with aplomb that he was the cutter of

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1. Jīvanmuktiviveka. P. 149
2. इहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामा:। (Mnd. Up., 3.2.2)
3. किमिच्छन् कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत्। (Br. Up., 4.4.12)
4. ब्रह्माभयं वै, ब्रह्माभयं हि। (Br. Up., 4.4.25)
5. आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न विभेति कदाचन। (T.Up., 2.4.1)
6. स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्। (Gītā, 2.40)

the tree of the world. His fame was huge and wide like a mountain. He felt pure like sun, immortal and shining like a treasure. He felt indestructible, wise and immortal[1].

Abu Yazid, the Persian Sufi declared "Glory to me, how great is my majesty"[2]. Al Ghazali also expresses the feeling of his greatness in the same wording[3].

Vāmadeva asserted that, like a hawk, he escaped the hundreds of iron strongholds (bondages) spread to pin him down to the world. He could know about the gods even while in the mother's womb[4].

The liberated avows that he is the fame of Brahmins, the fame of Kṣatriyas, and Vaiśyas. He is the fame of fame[5].

The liberated feels honoured that he has reached the ultimate state, that he can enjoy the bliss of Brahman, that he has achieved whatever is achievable, that his satisfaction has no comparison, that ignorance in him has vanished. He feels great of his achievement[6]. He is bewildered by his own greatness and salutes himself (or desires others to salute him)[7].

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1. अहं वृक्षस्य रेरिवा। कीर्तिः पृष्ठं गिरेरिव। ऊर्ध्व पवित्रो वाजिनीव स्वमृतमस्मि। द्रविणं सवर्चसम्। सुमेधा अमृतोऽक्षितः। इति त्रिशंकोर्वेदानुवचनम्। (T.Up., 1.10.1)
2. Arberry : Sufism, An Account of the Mystics of Islam. P.54
3. Smith : Al Ghazali, the Mystic. P.191
4. शतं मा पुर आयसीररक्षन्नधः श्येनो जवसा निरदीयमिति। गर्भ एवैतच्छयानो वामदेव एवमुवाच। (At. Up., 2.1.5)
5. यशोऽहं भवामि ब्राह्मणानां यशो राज्ञां यशो विशां यशोऽहमनुप्रापत्सि स हाहं यशसां यशः। (Ch. Up., 8.14.1)
6. P.D., 14.58-64
7. अहो अहं नमो मह्यम्। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 2.11)

vii. Unmoved and Equanimous

The liberated reaches a unique state, where no amount of anything is sufficient to move his equanimity of mind. He is never troubled in sorrow nor anxious for pleasure[1]. He is neither happy nor sad at receiving good or bad[2]. He is untouched by righteousness or sin[3]. No amount of sorrow can perturb him[4]. Even if satisfied, he is not satisfied, even if tired, he is not tired[5]. He never blames, never praises, never feels excited with pleasure, and never frowns. He neither gives nor receives[6]. Neither the sight of longing woman nor that of approaching death leaves him moved[7]. His tolerance increases to such an extent that he does not even feel angry while being tortured or being devoured[8]. At this stage, says the Bṛhadāraṇyaka, "A thief is no thief, a hermit is no hermit"[9].

Observed, it becomes clear that actions, which are good or bad from the worldly point of view, lose their goodness or badness in that prime state. In a worldly

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1. दु:खेष्वनुद्विग्नमना: सुखेषु विगतस्पृह:। (Gītā, 2.56)
2. Gītā. 2.57
3. अनन्वागतं पुण्येन अनन्वागतं पापेन। (Br. Up., 4.3.22)
4. यस्मिन् स्थितो न दु:खेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते। (Gītā, 6.22)
5. सन्तुष्टोऽपि न सन्तुष्ट: खिन्नोऽपि न स खिद्यते। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 18.56)
6. न निन्दति न च स्तौति न हृष्यति न कुप्यति।
   न ददाति न गृह्णाति मुक्त: सर्वत्र नीरस:।। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 17.13)
7. Ibid. 17.14
8. धीरस्तु भोज्यमानोऽपि पीड्यमानोऽपि सर्वदा।
   आत्मानं केवलं पश्यन्न तुष्यति न कुप्यति।। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 3.9)
9. Br.Up., 4.3.22

man, good and bad deeds generate good and bad impressions bending the imbalance mind subsequently towards goodness or evil. But the liberated is poised and static. No amount of good work can purify him any further or no amount of evil deed can make him impure. He remains unmoved ever after, his mind poised like a flickerless flame in an breezeless place[1].

It may not mislead to an unexpected conclusion that the liberated is impugned against unethical deeds. The only significance of it is that the liberated man is stable in the face of contradictory situations of the world.

The perfect stability of such a man has been nicely expressed in the words of Plotinus: "God-possessed, he is poised in the void, and has attained to quiet: in his being, there is no lighter quiver of deviation ... uttterly stable he has become as it were the principle of stability"[2].

viii. Surpasses Time

At the attainment of liberation, the emancipated surpasses the boundaries of past, present and future. He rises above the temporal limits. For him, there is no sunset, no night, hence no need of a sunrise. There is eternal illumined day before him[3]. The ever moving time, divided into moments, hours, days and nights, into months, seasons and years seems to stop for him:

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1. यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते। (Gītā, 6.19)
2. Enneads. vi: 9.11.
3. एतं सेतुं तीर्त्वापि नक्तमहरेवाभिनिष्पद्यते। (Ch. Up., 8.4.2)
   न वै तत्र न निम्लोच नोदियाय कदाचन (Ch. Up., 3.11.2)
   सकृद् दिवा हैवास्मै भवति (Ch. Up., 3.11.3)

"क्व भूतं क्व भविष्यद्वा वर्तमानमपि क्व वा"[1]

(where is the past, the future and where is the present).

Says Eckhart:

"Where there is no yesterday, nor morrow, where it is now and today, there we see God"[2].

The past and future become an eternal now. He sees eternity in front of him. Henry Vaughan depicts the experience as:

"I saw Eternity the other night

... And round beneath it, Time, in hours, days, years

Driven by the spheres

Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world

And all her train were hurled"[3].

Vāmadeva, on being liberated, exclaimed that he had become the Sun and Manu[4]. The time barrier between himself and Manu seemed to have vanished for him. Christ expressed, "Before Abraham came to existence, I have been[5]. Tukaram recalled that when the great sage Śuka had his self-realisation, he himself was present to witness the grand happening[6]. Vāk felt that she was the old progenitor of the space[7].

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1. Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā. 19.3.
2. Pfieffer: Meister Eckhart. P.133.
3. Qt. Suzuki: Mysticism Christian and Buddhist. P.72-73.
4. अहं मनुरभवं सूर्यश्चेति। (Br. Up., 1.4.10)
5. Bible, John. 8:22, 6:62, 8:58, 3:13.
6. Ranade: A Constructive Survey of the Upaniṣadic Philosophy. P. 257.
7. परो दिवापर एना पृथिव्यै तावतीमहिनासंबभूव। (Rgveda, 10.125.8)

ix. Sovereign and Adorable

The liberated becomes great, sovereign[1] and is adored by people. The Taittirīya depicts it with a touch of mystery: A person who passes through the path of Brahman (The teat-like thing hanging between the palates is the path of Brahman, which, after reaching the parting of the hair passes out by separating the skull) is established in the fire as Vyāhṛti Bhūh, in air as Vyāhṛti Bhuvah, in sun as Vyāhṛti Mahah. He attains sovereignty over everything (conquers his internal foes). He becomes the lord of mind, lord of speech, lord of hearing, lord of intellect. The liberated lady, Vāk felt that she could move with the Rudras, the Vasus, the suns, the gods. She could hold the Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, Agni and the Aswinīs[2]. She felt that she was the resort of men and gods. If she wished, she could make anybody strong, intelligent or a sage[3].

x. Purifies the Posterity

"No posterity remains ignorant of Brahman in his line[4]" is the bold announcement of the Upaniṣad. The liberated not only emancipates himself from the world and its labyrinth but he purifies all the later generations. A child is the replica of the parents, who is born with their qualities and brought up in the environment they provide. It is, therefore, natural that the liberated is blessed with

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1. आप्नोति स्वाराज्यम्। (T.Up,. 1.6.2)
2. अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरुतविश्वदेवै:।
   अहं मित्रावरुणोभाविभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा।। (Ṛgveda, 10.125.1)
3. Ibid. 10.125.5.
4. नास्याब्रह्मवित् कुले भवति। (Mnd. Up., 3.2.9)

pure souls as his progeny and elevates him a long way by providing proper guidance as a parent and preceptor.

Behaviour of the Liberated Man

The liberation or Mokṣa, thus is the supreme state ever achievable by anybody who strives to attain it. Liberated from the thraldom of birth and death, sorrows and sufferings, taintless, sinless, doubtless, fearless, he rejoices everafter. "He has nothing more to do", says the Gītā[1].

But, being adorable by all, he becomes imitable too. Whatever he does, so follow the common people, whatever he vouches, is accepted by all. His behaviour, which therefore is extremely important, is most relevant to be discussed.

Although, in the three world, nothing for him is unattainable, no duty is undischarged, yet, he works incessantly not for his individual gain but for the benefit of the world to inspire the people[2]. In the event of his ceasing to work, says Lord Kṛṣṇa, the common mass, who always imitate and follow the great, will do the same and will face great disaster. There will be unworthy posterity and as a result a total destruction will come upon the society[3].

The Upaniṣads go one step forward to state that there is activity, only when there is happiness, and happiness is in the vastness or merging of personal entity in the universal one. Non-activity is caused by unhappiness

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1. तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते। (3.17)
2. लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि। (Gītā, 3.20)
3. उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्यां कर्म चेदहम्। (Gītā, 3.24)

when one clings to his own individual entity[1]. Life of a liberated, therefore, is more activised than a normal person.

How possibly can anyone perform the usual duties in the same world, which has lost its reality to him? There is, in fact, no contradiction between the attainment of liberation and performing one's worldly duties. Marvellously has it been depicted with the effective analogy of an unchaste woman who, although is attached to her lover in the heart, performs her household duties as usual at her husband's place. The performance of domestic chores does not hinder her mind from enjoying the pleasure of her illicit relation. So also a liberated man, lost in the happiness of liberation performs his mundane duties as usual, without any way being attached to them[2]. Says Ramkrishna:

"...blessed souls commune with Brahman in meditation and devote themselves, when not meditating, to the service of the world"[3].

But, unfortunately having miserably failed to understand the spirit of this philosophy, a few critics imagine that the eastern mystic stops working with the achievement of the mystic union. For example, Underhill says:

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1. यदा वै सुखं लभतेऽथ करोति नासुखं लब्ध्वा करोति सुखमेव लब्ध्वा करोति। (Ch. Up., 7.22.1)
2. परव्यसनिनी नारी व्यग्राऽपि गृहकर्मणि।
   तदेवास्वादयत्यन्तः परसङ्गरसायनम्।। (P.D., 11.122)
   एवं तत्त्वे परे शुद्धे धीरो विश्रान्तिमागतः।
   तदेवास्वादयत्यन्तर्बहिर्व्यवहरन्नपि।। (P.D., 11.123)
3. Qt. Radhakrishnan: Indian Philosophy. P. 44

"In the mystics of the west, the highest form of divine union impels the self to some sort of active rather than passive life; and this is now recognised by the best authorities as the true distinction between Christian and non-Christian Mystics"[1].

The liberated man, in fact, is a better performer of duties since he is free from worldly fetters, attachment and sorrow. There may be some so-called hindrances for the person trying for emancipation, but for the emancipated, there is no point why he cannot perform his duties[2].

Rightly has it been observed by Vivekananda: "It is not that when a man becomes free, he will stop and become a dead lump, but he will be more active than any other being, because every other being acts only under compulsion, and he alone through freedom"[3].

The liberated feels he has no compulsions for any performance. He is bound by no worldly or scriptural conducts. He is free to do or undo anything he wants. But he, at the same time, feels that it is better to perform according to the scriptures, since it would benefit the humanity by setting an example before others[4]. He lets his body perform actions like worshipping a personal God, taking baths in the stipulated times (thrice a day),

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1. Mysticism. p.172.
2. एवं ध्यानैकनिष्ठोऽपि लेशाल्लौकिकमाचरेत्।
   तत्त्ववित्त्वविरोधित्वाल्लौकिकं सम्यगाचरेत्।। (P.D., 9.87)
3. Vedanta Philosophy. P.69.
4. अथवा कृतकृत्योऽपि लोकानुग्रहकाम्यया।
   शास्त्रीयेणैव मार्गेण वर्तेऽहं का मम क्षतिः।। (P.D., 7.268)

reciting the Mantras, reading the Vedas, or meditating on gods[1].

According to Vidyaranya, "The liberated person, in order to be accessible to his fellow beings, behaves like an ignorant worldly person. Just as parents mould their behaviour according to the child, so also the liberated moulds his behaviour according to the ignorant[2].

Hence, the mystic's behaviour is an example to the society, never against the norms of it. His social and moral behaviour are the ideals of the rest of the world. Being the torchbearer of his fellow counterparts, he cannot afford to act according to his sweet will. He binds himself with voluntary fetters of discipline, not to regulate himself (since there is no further need to do so), but to lead his followers in the right path.

The mystic should wish to be sweet and serene like a child, advises the Upaniṣads. A fine example of humility is noticed in one of the Upaniṣadic stories, which goes like this: When approached by Sukeśā, Śaivya, Gārgya, Kaushalya, Bhārgava, Kātyāyana with faggots on their hands for asking questions, sage Pippalāda advised them to practise austerity for one full year and then ask questions. 'If he knew' the answers he would certainly reply to them[3]. It is an excellent example of humility on the part of the mystic. It was not that sage Pippalāda was sceptic about his own knowledge. Had it been so, he would certainly have not advised them to stay there and

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1. P.D., 7. 268-72
2. अविद्वदनुसारेण वृत्तिर्बुद्धस्य युज्यते।
   स्तनन्धयानुसारेण वर्तते तत्पिता यथा।। (P.D., 7.287)
3. तान् हस ऋषिरुवाच भूय एव तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया संवत्सरं संवत्स्यथ यथाकामं प्रश्नान् पृच्छत यदि विज्ञास्यामः सर्वं ह वो वक्ष्याम इति। (Pr.Up., 1.2)

practise austerity for such a long time without even knowing what they wanted to ask. It is a remarkable union of discipline and humility. "The mystic" says Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, "performs both good or bad with perfect simplicity of a child"[1].

But, it has been most unfortunate that a few scholars have misconceived a few words like "Kāmacāra" (doer according to his will) and have failed to understand the spirit thereof. A quotation from Hume may not be irrelevant to mention, which says:

"There is a wide difference between the Upaniṣadic theory and the theory of Greek Sages, that the man who has knowledge should thereby, become virtuous in character or that the result of teaching should be a virtuous life. Here, the possession of some metaphysical knowledge, actually cancels all past sins and even permits and knower unblushingly to continue in "what seems to be much evil" with perfect impunity, although such acts are heinous crimes and are disastrous in their effect for others who lack that kind of knowledge"[2].

Also says Keith: "The emancipated self possesses autonomy but it is not an ethical state. It is merely a condition of unhindered power, the ideal of a despot, the state of the man who goes up and down these worlds, eating what he desires, assuming what form he desired[3]''.

Such unthinkable observations are the unfortunate aftermaths of utter failure to perceive the grand and subtle ideas of the Upaniṣads. In the first place "the knowledge

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1. यदा यत्कर्तुमायाति तदा तत्कुरुते ऋजुः।
   शुभं वाप्यशुभं वापि तस्य चेष्टा हि बालवत्।। (Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā, 18.49)
2. Qt. The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads, P. 60
3. Keith: Religion and Philosophy of Veda and the Upaniṣad, P. 586-587

of Brahman" which causes liberation of the seeker is not the indirect theoretical knowledge (discussed earlier), but the actual realisation of it where the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman, which is impossible without a total transformation of one's whole personality. The Upaniṣad, in distinct terms, has stated[1].

"नाविरतो दुश्चरितान्नाशान्तो नासमाहित:।
नाशान्तमनसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात्।।"

(No body can attain Brahman with mere theoretical knowledge, without turning away from evil character without being tranquil, without practising trance and without controlling his mind.)

It has been expressed in the words of the mystic at his attainment of liberation that he, 'having shaken off all his sins, like a horse shakes off his mane, having coming out of the mortal coil, like the moon coming out of the mouth of Rāhu, has attained the Brahmaloka[2]'

How possibly could it be thought that the liberated sages, who are to lead the rest of the world, would indulge in heinous crimes, after the attainment of emancipation? How desirable is it to think that they make strenuous efforts, shun all worldly pleasures and comforts and lead a life full of strain and pain only to reach a state where they could be free to do immoral acts with impunity? To quote Radhakrishnan:

"Laws and regulations are necessary for those men who do not naturally conform to the dictates of

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1. Kth. Up., 1.2.24
2. श्यामाच्छबलं प्रपद्ये शबलाच्छ्यामं प्रपद्येऽश्व इव रोमाणि विधूय पापं चन्द्र इव राहोर्मुखात् प्रमुच्य धूत्वा शरीरमकृतं कृतात्मा ब्रह्मलोकमभिसम्भवामि.....। (Ch. Up., 8.13.1)

conscience. But for those who have risen above their selfish egos, morality becomes the very condition of their being"[1].

That they are not bound by sin or righteousness never means that their life is unleashed and uncontrolled. It simply means that they reach a state, which is much higher than the plane where vice and virtue have their respective meanings and implications. The liberated surpasses everything. It would not be irrelevant to quote Plotinus in the context:

"Even of beautiful he is no longer aware, for now he has travelled beyond the beautiful. The very concert of the virtues is overpassed"[2].

Moreover, the Upniṣads very frequently emphasise that it is an ethical and pure only a pure state. The Muṇḍaka refers to the mystics as pure-minded, always holy and pure, rising above sins[3]. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka categorically says that sin cannot cross him but he can cross the sin, sin cannot burn him but he can burn the sin. Sinless, taintless, doubtless is the knower of Brahman[4].

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1. Indian Philosophy. P.228.
2. Enneads. Vi. 9.9-11.
3. शुद्धसत्वा:। (Mnd.Up., 3.2.6,)
   विशुद्धसत्त्व:। (Mnd.Up., 3.1.10)
   तरति पाप्मानम्। (Mnd.Up., 3.2.9)
4. नैनं पाप्मा तरति सर्वं पाप्मानं तरति नैनं पाप्मा तपति सर्वं पाप्मानं तपति विपापो विरजोऽविचिकित्सो ब्राह्मणो भवति। (Br. Up., 4.4.23)

5

Place of Upaniṣads in the World of Mysticism

Mysticism has secured a considerably high place in almost all religions in the world, although a few mystics have been atheists. Having analysed the Upaniṣadic mysticism, it is appropriate to discuss it in comparison with a few important mysticisms of the world (Mysticisms, sprung in India have been excluded from the comparison, since, the Upaniṣads themselves are the fountain-heads of almost all of them.) To make the comparison clearer, a brief discussion of the mystic concepts of the main religions is presented in precedence:

Taoism

Taoism, a prominent religion of ancient China was founded by Lao Tse, (also known as Lao-Tan or Lao-Tzu) born in the 7th (according to the traditional view) or between 4th and 3rd century BC (according to others). The literal meaning of Tao is 'the way'. Confucianists take it to mean 'the way to heaven' or 'the way to God in connection with men', signifying the right way of living. Yet to some Taoists it means the operative principle of the universe, after which things work.

Tao stands for the Ultimate Reality. It finds almost the same place as Brahman in the Upaniṣads. It is self-rooted,

self-existent, beyond time and space, It never grows old. It is higher than the zenith and lower than the nadir. Tao is not expressible by words. Neither speech nor silence has the capability to make Tao understood, since It is ineffable. It is eternal and pervading, unfathomable and silent. It is imperceptible. It neither lords nor intrudes. It has no outer sign to reveal It. It is the supreme mystery, the mystery of the mysteries. It benefits without kindness, destroys without cruelty. It supports the universe without skill[1].

Tao is the invariable principle underlying the altering phenomena of the universe. Tao is the creator of heaven, earth and man and the creation. Lao Tse writes

"Out of Tao, One is born

Out of One, Two

Out of Two, Three

Out of Three, the myriad things.

The myriad things bear the male and embrace the female

And attain harmony through the union of immaterial breaths[2].

The world, according to Taoism is a dream like illusion. The sage, through serious practice exalts himself to a state where he perceives reality. The so-called reality of the world fades before him and he finds "all that has the breath of life, all that possesses bodily form, is mere illusion"[3].

Taoism advocates the yogic method of concentrating the mind by control of breath, without which it is

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1. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.100.
2. Qt. Chi: A Short History of Confucian Philosophy. P.43.
3. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.116.

impossible to have unity with Tao. The seeker is advised to concentrate the breath and make it soft like that of a child.

Non-violence is held in high esteem in Taoism and violence is condemned. It is said that violence is against Tao and that which is against Tao has to perish soon[1].

According to Taoism, spiritual power is the only effective power to create harmony in the society. It is the power which commands respect without outward compulsion. "If kings and barons" according to Lao Tse "would but possess themselves of it, ten thousand creatures would flock to do them homage... without law and compulsion, men would dwell in harmony". Law, according to Taoism is rather futile and harmful. "The more laws are promulgated, the more thieves and robbers there will be"[2].

Taoism advocates the virtue of inaction. "Rule a big country as you would fry a small fish", was the famous advice of Lao Tse. The significance of the cryptic sentences is that a king should rule a kingdom as easily as one fries a small fish. The people should be let alone to leave peacefully without being interfered by the administration. Emphasising inaction he writes:

He who conquers the world often does so

By doing nothing

When one is compelled to do something

The world is already beyond his conquering"[3].

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1. Ibid. p.104.
2. Ibid. 105.
3. Qt. Chi: A Short History of Confucian Philosophy. P.43.

Humility receives great applause in Taoism. Meekness or lowliness is regarded as the typical Taoist ideal, for the meek or the low is always considered to be nearest to Tao, says Lao Tse:

"In mind how like I am a fool. I am in a maze. The common people are brightly intelligent; I alone am good for nothing and despicable. I alone differ from other people, but I glory in my nursing mother (Tao)"[1].

Self-propagation is badly condemned and held very low. It is clear from the words of Lao Tse:

"He who is self displaying does not shine

He who is self approving is not held in esteem.

He who is self promising has no merit

He who is self exalting does not stand high"[2].

Human nature, according to Taoism has a transcendental element than is perceived. It is the universal mind, concentrating on which man attains Cheng (reality) and Meng (enlightenment). He realises to be one with the universe. He identifies himself with each and everything of it. "To him, there is nothing that is not himself. He is undifferentiably one with other things"[3].

At the attainment of universal love, he finds peace both in activity and without that. It makes no difference for him if he discharges responsible job or is lonely in the woods. For contemplation, he does not necessarily need a place with stillness. His involvement with the mundane affairs never makes him suffer loss.

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1. Bettany : Encyclopedia of World Religion. P.148.
2. Ibid.
3. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in world Religion. P.119.

Jewish Mysticism

Jewish mysticism or Judaism is one of the ancient religions of the world. Following are a few important forms of Judaism:

i. Merkabah Mysticism

The Merkabah mysticism, otherwise known as Chariot mysticism, was expounded by seers like Abraham, Baruch and Enoch. Their apocalyptic visions, glossed in Ezekeil are the sources of this mysticism.

The Ultimate Reality of Merkabah mysticism is God (Yahweh), seated on a throne in the heaven. The throne is encircled with fire and there is a chariot, which has fiery wheels. An appropriate description is as below:

"His throne radiates before Him and His
Palace is full of splendour
His majesty is becoming and His glory is
An adornment for Him
His servants sing before Him and proclaim
The might of His wonders
As king of all kings and master of all masters
Encircled by rows of crowns, surrounded
By the ranks of the princes of splendour,
With a gleam of His ray he encompasses the sky
And His splendour radiates from the heights
Abysses flame from His mouth and firmaments

Sparkle from His body"[1].

Fire has a very important place in the Jewish Mysticism, most probably used to express the divine presence. The mention of fire is found every now and then. When Eliezer Arach, a rabbi was teaching Merkabah Mysticism to Yohanan ben Zacci, fire came down from heaven and the trees in the field were engulfed by the same. An angel from the fire shouted, "Truly, these even these are the secrets of Merkabah"[2].

The aim of a mystic, according to Jewish Mysticism is to ride to the heaven and have a vision of Hekhaloth and then Merkabah. He is named as 'Merkabah rider'. This privilege is gained by strict moral performance like fasting and bathing. A total purification, in other words, is necessary for such a ride. During the ride of the mystic, he receives, at every stage, a magic seal with a secret name for his safe ascent. At the arrival of the mystic, he visualises the Merkabah. To express his vision, he, with delight and ecstasy sings the song in praise of the Merkabah. Prophets like Abraham, Enoch and rabbis (spiritual teachers) like Ishmael had their ascent during their lifetime.

One of the remarkable characteristics of Merkabah mysticism is that it believes in a wide gap between man and God, which can never be bridged and it is impossible for a man to be one with God. All that a mystic can achieve is a vision of the throne. To stand before it and to have an expression of illumination is the highest of the achievements. God, for Merkabah Mysticism is above every other thing, which is clear in the words of Scholem:

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1. Scholem : Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism. p.59.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.177.

"We find no trace of a mystical union between the soul and God. Throughout, there remained an almost exaggerated consciousness of God's otherness, nor does the identity and individuality of the mystic become blurred even at the height of ecstatic passion[1]".

The highest exaltation that a person can be elevated is to appear as an angel. Enoch, when he ascended the seventh heaven was clothed with the raiment of his glory by the angel Michael, at the behest of God. He then looked like one of his glorious angels. He was also, during his ascent, identified with Metatron, the angel who was known as the Prince of the world.

ii. Hasidism

Hasidism is another form of Judaism, which was expounded mainly by Samuel, Judah and Elzear of Worm. It came to being in Germany in 12th century AD. The word Hasid means "Pious" or "Devout", which amply suggests that the school attaches utter importance in leading a devotional life for the attainment of the vision of God.

According to Hasidism, God is infinite and endless (En-sof). He is the infinite light (or-en-sof) from which the lights of Sefiroth come out, which illumines the human mind. Hasidism believes in five invisible worlds of which the highest is the world of light, identified with the glory of God. It believes that a heavenly curtain is spread over the throne of God, which has the picture of the world.

Love of God holds an important place in Hasidism, which, it is believed, vanquishes individual egoism and fills one's life with joy. "When the soul thinks" says Elea "deeply about the fear of God, then the flame of heart felt

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1. Scholem : Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism. pp.55-56.

love burst in it, and the exultation of innermost joy fills the heart"[1].

Immense importance is also attached to the recitation of the holy names. Some mysterious power is believed to be present in the names of God.

Welcoming sufferings and denying worldly pleasures have been prescribed as the ideal way of life for a mystic. He is advised to avoid women only except marriage, avoid wayward speech and usual pleasures of life. He is advised to subject the body for deliberate tortures like sitting on ice for a specific period during the winter or get stung by ants or bees during summer. He should not fail in discharging civic duties with a fellow-feeling towards his counterparts. He should be indifferent towards praises and blames and should practise penance.

iii. Kabbalism

The very word Kabbal, which means tradition, implies that Kabbalism is that form of Judaism, which believes in the true interpretation of scriptures. It started in Provence and Spain in 12 century AD. The main mystics are Abulafia, Issac Luria and his followers.

Kabbalism has many new ideas in it, in comparison to other forms of Jewish mysticism. The Kabbalist (Abulafia in particular) believes that man is one with God, which is remote for other forms of Judaism. "The man" says Abulafia, "who felt the divine touch and perceived its nature is no longer separated from his Master... for he is so intimately united to Him that he can not by any means be separated from Him[2].

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1. Qt. Spencer : Mysticism in World Religion. P.185.
2. Ibid. p.188.

Kabbalism introduces bodily postures, breath control and mystical meditation for the realisation of God in the heart. It is influenced by the Indian mystical method of Yoga. Says Scholem:

"Abulafia lays down certain rules of body posture, certain corresponding combination of consonants and vowels, and certain forms of recitation, and in particular, some passages of his book "The Light of the Intellect" give the impression of a Judaized treatise on Yoga. The similarity even extends to some aspects of the doctrine of ecstatic vision, as preceded and brought about by these practices"[1]. It also attaches immense importance on a preceptor, who is regarded as a super-human being. Kabbalist (Abulafia) denounces magical practices in total. Issac Luria gives high importance to mystical prayer and meditation. Fasting and other methods of purifications are also adopted. Love for fellow being has found a very significant place in Kabbalism. It is believed that all the beings are originally interrelated, and hence, the commitment of sin not only injures one's own self but also to that part of himself, which belongs to others. Love has to be nurtured by regular prayer and meditation. The mystic is advised to pray God every night not to punish any of his fellow beings for having sinned against him.

The concept of Sefiroth finds place in this kind of mysticism. The Sefiroth is a total of ten principles. They are Kether (crown of god), Hokhmah (the divine wisdom), Binah (the divine intelligence), Hesed (the love of god), Din (the power of god), Tifereth (beauty of compassion), Netsah (victory), Hod (glory), Yesod (foundation) and Malkuth (kingdom of god). These are the ten lights (discussed earlier), which purify the human mind.

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1. Scholem: Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism. P.138.

Greek Mysticism

Polytheism was the main practice in the ancient Greek religions. Along with this practice, there were groups of people in ancient Greece, who practised a secret religion called "Mystery", which had two main groups, namely, Elusinian and Dionysian. The main schools of Greek mysticism, in a nutshell, are as follows:

i. Orphic Mysticism

Orphic Mysticism belongs to the Dionysian group. Man, according to the Orphic mysticism has a divine origin, who belongs to the "blessed race" of the "Immortal Gods". But he has a dual nature of contrasting elements. He is considered to be the child of the Earth as well as the heaven. Knowledge is the divine element of his nature through the power of which, he is able to see the eternal truth, which is transcendental to the senses, but is reflected as harmony, order and proportion in the yonder world. Due to his impious deeds, man is imprisoned in the body and is doomed to revolve in the cycle of transmigration.

In order to be liberated from the thraldom of the body and the ever-rotating births and deaths, man has to reform his life through the practice of righteousness and penance. He is advised to be initiated and follow the strict disciplines of purity like abstaining oneself from prohibited food and pleasures. As a result of his penance, he is united with God and attains happiness and immortality.

ii. Hermetic Mysticism

Hermetic mysticism, one of the important Hellenistic mysticisms gets sprung from the "Hermetic Writings",

attributed to "Hermese Tris megistus", a mystic of ancient Egypt.

God, according to Hermetic mysticism, is transcendent to everything. The Hermetic Writings depict that God is beyond all praise and excels all superiority. "Of Him no words can tell, no tongue can speak, silence only can declare Him"[1].

God is also immanent in the world. He is the creator and the father. He created everything from Him. Therefore, He is present in everything[2]. God is the essence of good and beautiful.

Man, according to Hermetic mysticism, has a divine nature. But, due to ignorance he is unaware of the nature of the Reality or the nature of his own self. As a result, instead of controlling the body, he is controlled by it. According to Hermetic Writings, "the wretched soul, not knowing itself carries round the body like a load, not controlling it, but controlled by it"[3].

In order to know the Reality, and experience the divine nature of man, one has to quit the worldly life. It is not possible according to Hermetic mysticism, to cling to the world and find God. It is left to man to choose the mundane or the divine.

A lot of importance has been attached to the grace of God. The favour of God uplifts the soul and paves the way for the experience of the Reality. Says Hermese Tris megistus:

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1. Qt. Spencer : Mysticism in world Religion. P.143.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p.144.

"Pray that you may find favour, and that but one ray of God may flash upon your mind"[1].

In order to realise God, man has to be equal with Him. God is apprehended only by the like, none else. Man has to expand himself into immeasurable greatness. He has to pass all the bodily limits, has to raise above the time and become eternal[2]. "If you" says Hermese Tris megistus "canst not make thyself equal to God, thou canst not know God"[3], because like is apprehended by the like[4].

The mystic, according to Hermetic mysticism, not only feels equalised in his mystic experience, but also feels oneness with the universe. He feels his existence in the heaven, in the earth, in the air and in the water. He feels he is very much present everywhere and in every living creature.

iii. Plato and Aristotle

Plato, who is basically a polytheist, believes Good to be the Supreme Reality, Supreme Beauty, and the source of everything, the highest of ideas and forms, and is identified with God. It is "the single transcendent Reality of absolute perfection which is the ultimate cause and explanation of the universe"[5]. It is also identical with Demiurge, the craftsman, who is the creator of all.

The knowledge of the Absolute is called the Idea. "God is for religion what Idea is for philosophy. God is a figurative name for Idea. To place the end of life in the

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1. Ibid. p.146.
2. Ibid.P. 145.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Armstrong: An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy. P.39.

knowledge of the Absolute, or the Idea, is therefore the teaching both of philosophy and religion"[1].

The world, according to Plato is not real but only a shadow. Men, unaware of the ultimate truth are like prisoners in a dark cave, behind whom huge fire is burning. Between the prisoners and the fire, lies a broad path. Shadows of the prisoners who pass through it are cast on the wall of the cave by the fire. Thus, whatever is seen by men is but shadow[2], the Ultimate Reality lying beyond.

Soul, which belongs to the world of forms could behold the Reality and remains in the company of gods before entering the body. The divine and immortal part of the soul is "nous" (literally meaning "reason" or "intelligence"), which is regarded as "the eye of the soul", and is the highest mind. The knowledge, therefore, is but a recollection of the truth.

Recollection (anamnesis) finds an important place in the philosophy of Plato. For him "every man's soul has by the law of his birth been a seer of eternal truth"[3]. "As soon as he beholds the beauty of the world, is reminded of true beauty and his wings begin to grow, yet he has not the power, but in as much as he gazes upward like a bird and cares nothing for the world beneath"[4].

Through the exercise of nous man can rise to the eternal world and can have the vision of the Reality. Consistent enquiry and intellectual discipline is the only way to have vision of the Reality.

The vision, rather than union, has been highlighted in the philosophy of Plato. But reference of union may be

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1. Stace : A Critical History of Greek Philosophy. P.207.
2. Plato: Republic. Vii. 514A.
3. Phaedrus. 249f.
4. Ibid.

traced in his 'Republic' where he mentions that by the exercise of nous, man "holds intercourse with that which really exists and begets wisdom"[1].

Aristotle, who was the disciple of Plato, agrees to most of the theories of his master but differs a little in a few concepts. He believes that the different kinds of reality have distinctive properties of their own, contrary to the Platonic theory of formal similarities. He believes that the world is made up of individual substances. It is not a single tightly connected system[2]. Souls, according to Aristotle, assume forms according to their respective natures. For him, a human being has a rational soul as an animal has a sensitive soul and a plant yet has a vegetative soul.

Nous, according to Aristotle is the activity of God. It is the essence of man as well as of God, and is eternal which does not end with the end of life. It is that nature of man, which is identical with that of God. Through contemplation, man can attain the eternal life of God. Aristotle believes that when man attains the knowledge of himself, God knows Himself to be entering into man.

iv. Plotinus

Plotinus, who was born in 205 AD in Egypt and settled in Rome, is one of the most famous mystics of the world. He is the composer of the famous work Enneads, which consists of six books, each book with nine sections.

According to Plotinus, there is a triad of hypostases in the Godhead viz. good, nous and soul. Good, the source of everything, begets nous and nous begets the soul. The soul is the creator of the universe. Good (God), which is the

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1. Republic. vi. 490.
2. Brumbaugh; The Philosophers of Greece. P.174-175.

fountainhead of creation is the ultimate goal of man. It is both transcendent and immanent in the creation. It is the measure of all, is self-sufficient and has no need of its own. It is the fullest, the greatest and the noblest. It is above all the feelings and all the reasoning. It is unable to be comprehended by mind and inexpressible by words. It is "beyond all statements". "We can but try to indicate, in our feeble way, something concerning it"[1].

Soul, according to Plotinus is one and omnipresent. But, it is manifested separately in separate beings. It is a unique principle of variety in unity. One being is separate from another. Yet "the variety does not abrogate the unity; the souls are apart without partition . . . . They are no more hedged off by boundaries than are the multiple items of knowledge in one mind. The one soul so exists as to include all souls"[2].

The individual is a congregation of both the higher and lower soul or the universal and individual soul. The universal soul, in one hand is united with nous at the optimum end, whereas it is linked with the individual soul at the bottom. Each soul is eternal and belongs to the world of nous. The concept of matter in the philosophy of Plotinus is a bit complicated. It is regarded as unordered and the absence of being. It has a material existence, yet does not exist in the real sense.

The soul of man descends to the earth and yet is undisconnected from its divine origin above the heaven. But, unfortunately it recalls neither the source, nor the abode, not even its own nature. It clings dearly to the world, which is unfamiliar to him. Says Plotinus:

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1. Enneads. v:3.13, iii: 8.10.
2. Ibid. vi:4.4.

"So the souls no longer discern either God or their own nature . . . All their awe and admiration is for the alien . . . the mundane"[1].

The world, or the worldly life has never been denounced by Plotinus. On the contrary, he advises to welcome the world and discharge the worldly duties with sincerity. The world, according to him is not the cause of evil, but it is the matter which is "the cause at once of the weakness of the soul and of all its evil"[2].

The goal of the individual being is to be united with the nous and through the nous it aspires to be one with the Good. To attain it, one has to, in the beginning culture civic virtues like patience, prudence, justice and courage. Then gradually, he has to be indifferent and unaffected by the activities of the sense. Just like a sculptor cuts away unnecessary parts of the stone while making a statue, the unnecessary externals of one's life should be cut off and man should be introvert and detached in order to attain the goal. The mystic's journey is "a passing of solitary to the solitary"[3]. To enter alone to the loneliness of one's own being is necessary for the vision. Says Plotinus, "Fit ourselves for the vision, and then wait tranquilly for its appearance, as the eye waits for the rising of the sun"[4].

The mystic experience is called vision by Plotinus. The Supreme is visioned by the light that flood from nowhere except it. It is the light, yet is the vision. "The light is from the Supreme and is the Supreme. This is the true end, set before the soul to take that light, to see the

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1. Enneads. v:1.1.
2. Ibid. iv: 8.14.
3. Ibid. vi:9.11.
4. Ibid. v: 5.8.

Supreme by the Supreme ... just as we do not see the sun by light other than its own"[1].

The vision is baffling. There is no experience of the inner or the outer world. There is unity of the soul with the Supreme. There is a complete merger, without any distinction. There is no sense of the dual entity. Man is no longer a man but is raised to Godhood.

Christian Mysticism

The Christian mysticism bestows divinity upon a historical person, Jesus, later known as Jesus Christ, the word Christ meaning "Messiah" or "Anointed". He is regarded as the "son of God" by some Christians and yet regarded as God by others, although Christ himself has mentioned, "The Father (God) is greater than I am"[2].

Born in Bethelham, he was baptized in the Jordan River by the baptizer John and perhaps the illumination came over to him then. As he came out of the water he experienced that "the heavens were opened up and he saw descending like a dove, God's spirit coming upon him[3].

His ecstasy was later mentioned as transfiguration. The Bible puts it, "He was transfigured before them, his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light[4].

Jesus experienced God as the divine father who was very much in him. When asked by Philip to show the Father, Jesus said "I am in the Father and the Father is in me. The things I say to you men, I do not speak of my own

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1. Ibid. v: 3.17.
2. Bible. John: 10.34-36, 14.28.
3. Bible. Mathew: 3.17.
4. Ibid. 17.2.

originality, but the Father who remains in me does His work"[1].

Jesus also realised that he was the truth and the way and also the life that no one could reach the Father except through him[2]. Unnecessary to say that the followers of Christ are called Christian and the religion Christianity.

There have been many mystics in Christianity in many parts of the world. Dionysius, Meister Eckhart, St. Augustine, Suso, Ruysbroke, St Teresa, St. John of Cross are a few names, readers come across very frequently. The main concepts of Christian mysticism are as following:

i. God

God, according to Christianity is the Supreme Reality. He is transcendent as well as immanent in the world. He is ineffable, beyond all intellectual knowledge and without a name. In no way can God be expressed by words. He is beyond apprehension, knowledge and expression, because He is perfect and things which are parts can be apprehended, known or expressed.

According to Eckhart "God is better than anything we can conceive ... Our highest aspirations are but grovelling things falling hopelessly short of God"[3].

God is unfathomable and great and beyond all our reasoning and concepts. He is beyond thought and beyond utterance. He surpasses the reach of the words. He dwells in a region beyond us where our feet cannot tread.

Dionysius prefers the negative way to describe God but does not deny that He possesses positive qualities like

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1. Bible. John: 14.10.
2. Ibid. 14.9.
3. Pfeiffer : Meister Eckhart. P.133.

power, and wisdom etc. But He is transcendent to all. He surpasses even the mind and the soul. In fact neither affirmation nor negation is sufficiently applied to Him. "He transcends all affirmation as the perfect and unique cause of all things, and all negation by the pre-eminence of His simple and absolute nature, free from every limitation and beyond them all[1]."

According to Eckhart, "God is neither this nor that"[2]. He is high above us. He is neither good, nor better, nor best. Due to the negative description, God must not be mistaken as non-existent. He is, according to Eckhart, the only Reality. All that are created are "mere nothings" as their very existence depends on the existence within them.

Nicholas of Cusa introduces the concept of "instructed ignorance". According to him "we know of God what He is not rather than what He is". "The ignorance in question is not the result of refusal to make an intellectual effort or of religious indifference; it proceeds from the realisation of infinity and transcendence. It is thus learned or instructed ignorance. Know that God is beyond knowledge is a sacred ignorance. God is somehow approachable by the person who is a sacred ignorant of Him".[3]

God is regarded as the creator of the universe, but not in the sense a sculptor is the creator of a statue. On the contrary, it is a process of emanation in which God brings out the different existences out of Himself, while remaining one. Hence, He dwells indivisibly within the separate and individual things. "He is in Himself the absolute ground, in which all otherness is unity and all diversity is identity"[4].

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1. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.239.
2. Otto : Mysticism East and West. P.11.
3. Compleston: A History of Philosophy (Book one) P. 235-236
4. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P. 242

God, therefore, "moves with all that moves and stands with all that stands"[1]. God pervades the whole universe.

Nicholas regards God as the absolute vision, who beholds men and gives Himself to men through beholding.

According to Christian mysticism, soul dwells in eternity. Although God is said to be dwelling in every soul, there is a particular aspect in the soul, which is the place of God. According to St. Teresa, soul has different mansions and God dwells in one of them, which is in the centre of the soul. It is "the little Heaven of the soul" she says "where dwells the creator of Heaven and Earth"[2].

The soul, according to Julian Norwich is divided into the lower and higher parts. The higher part, where there is highest love and joy is united with God.

ii. Deification

The goal of Christian mysticism is the deification of the soul, which is the experience attained during the ecstasy of mystics. It is called 'the union with God' by some and 'vision' by other mystics. It has been named "unknowing" by Dionysius.

Deification (or the mystic experience) may be transient or permanent. The transient one comes accidentally without expectation. Many mystics and common people have had their sudden mystic experiences during their lifetime. St. Augustine, during his early years had the vision (as he likes to call it) repeatedly, which he was utterly tempted to retain. The permanent deification has to be thoroughly attained by practising pious activities.

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1. Ibid.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.243.

iii. Way to Deification

"Three fold" says Dionysius "is the way to God. The first is the way to purification, in which the mind is inclined to learn true wisdom, can be called purgation. The second is the way of illumination, in which the mind by contemplation is kindled to the burning of love. The third is the way of union, in which the mind, by understanding, reason and spirit is led by God alone"[1].

A life of complete piety with total renunciation of self-love and conquest of attachment is necessary for a mystic to attain the deification. Renunciation of self-love has been given utmost importance by Dionysius. "An unceasing and absolute renunciation of ourselves and of all things", according to him "is the bare need if man wishes to be led upwards"[2].

One has to go out of himself and surrender completely before God and belong to Him only. Just as consciousness of Self is lost during contemplation, in real life one has to be lost in God, totally surrendered to Him.

Love for God has a high place in Christianity. Eckhart thinks that through knowledge man can receive God but through love man can enter into God. Prayer and meditation occupy very significant places in this mysticism. Dionysius, St. Simon, Maximus etc. have high eulogy for prayer in the uplift of the soul to the experience of deification. Says Dionysius, "In prayer, we draw near to the primal Goodness, all embracing infinitude[3].

Prayer is like a rope hanging down from the heaven. When pulled down by souls, instead of being drawn

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1. Qt. Woods (ed): Understanding Mysticism. p.33.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.225.
3. Ibid. p.227.

downwards it pulls the souls upwards to the refulgence of the resplendent rays.

A particular type of prayer, named Hesychasm (Jesus prayer) is practised and propagated by some mystics like St. Simon. The Prayer "O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" is repeated with every drawl of breath. It is believed, it contains some divine energy in it.

Humility and love for fellow being has occupied special places in the Christian mysticism. To love one's neighbour, as one's own self is a significant teaching of Chrisitianity. "The love of Christ" says Augustine Baker "will not permit us to exercise enemity towards any person in the least degree"[1]. St, Francis is said to have drawn immense pleasure in the patient tolerance of abuse and wrath.

Grace is essentially unavoidable in the Christian mysticism. It is believed that the grace of God is necessary for the purification of the soul and his drawing away from temporal things. It is the grace of God that uplifts the soul during depression. During his moments of deprivation and feeling of alienation from God, St. Augustine is reported to have heard the voice of God as follows:

"I am the food of grown men; grow and thou shalt feed on Me; nor shalt thou transform Me, like the food of thy flesh, into thee but thou shalt be transformed into Me"[2].

iv. The Divine Light

As a result of constant practice of meditation, prayer and other devotional activities, the mystic receives a typical

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1. Ibid. p.248.
2. Ibid. p.233.

mystical experience of the vision of light. It deifies the soul. "The mind" says Maximus, "is ravished by the divine boundless light, and loses all sensation of itself or any other creature and is aware of him alone, who through love, has produced this illumination"[1]. St. Simon describes of a young man, who was seated in a room when the divine radiance descended from above and filled the room. He then forgot where he was, as he could see the light and nothing else. He did not remember that he was under a roof. He was transformed wholly to the Light of Holy Spirit.

St. Augustine depicts the light he saw as a "light unchangeable". It is not an ordinary light that the eyes can see, nor is a bigger of the kind. It is incomparable by anything else. It is not seen by the human eyes but by the eyes of the soul. While describing his own experience of the mystical light, St.Simon says that he was filled with the light and glory and his face shined like that of his beloved.

v. The Dark Night of the Soul

During the incessant journey towards the goal of deification, there comes a stage, where the mystic feels a stagnation and an emotional lethargy which is named as the Dark Night of the Soul. It is a stage of temporary cessation of divine union, which according to most of the Christian mystics, is unavoidable. St. John of Cross takes it as a "necessary ingredient" in the perfection of spiritual experience. Dean Inge goes one step further to say that even a mystic may be distrusted if he has not undergone the experience of the Dark Night[2].

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1. Ibid. 225.
2. Qt.Ranade: Mysticism in Maharashtra. P.18.

According to St. John of Cross, the reasons why it is called the Dark Night, are three: "First on account of the dark nature of the starting point, namely the evanescent life of the world: secondly, on account of the dark nature of the road by which one must travel, namely that of faith; finally, on account of the dark nature of the goal to be reached, which is infinite in its nature"[1].

However, Tillyard tries to give an absolutely different explanation to the Dark Night. According to him, it is called Dark Night not because God withdraws Himself, but because the mystic becomes unable to endure the brilliance of his vision[2].

According to Berdyaev, the Dark Night has to be experienced because along with the identity of creature and creator, the gulf by which they are separated, has also to be experienced.

However, it is believed that the Dark Night of the Soul pushes the seeker further towards the deification more vehemently. St. Catherine of Siena is reported to have heard a divine voice, which said, "I withdrew Myself from her sentiment, depriving her of former consolations, which I do in order to humiliate her and cause her to seek Me in every truth, and to prove her in the light of faith"[3].

vi. Spiritual Marriage

The final stage of the mystic, which is known by names like "deification", "transforming" or "deifying union" is also named as "Spiritual Marriage", perhaps to make its permanent nature prominent. Here the soul unites

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1. Ibid. P.18
2. Ibid.
3. Qt. Spencer. Mysticism in World Religion. P.252.

with God. Following six stages, according to Bonaventure, have to be covered in order to reach the final union[1]:

1. The first stage is the sweetness of God, by tasting which man loses his attachment towards the creatures.
2. In the second stage man can gauge how far he is away from God.
3. In the third stage the soul vehemently proceeds towards God.
4. The fourth stage is that of inebriation. Torment becomes consolation for him. He takes delight in pain and suffering.
5. In the fifth stage, he feels secured. Finds happiness along with security.
6. The last stage is of peace and rest and tranquility.

The experience of the mystics have been variously depicted as if trying one's best to fit in the experience to the best available expression, yet facing poverty of words to give an exact expression to the feelings.

During the experience, the mystic feels God being united with him, penetrating every part of his body as light passes through a glass or fire enters into an iron. He feels the love of God consuming the seeds of his sins, like a blazing fire consumes everything. Narrating the feelings John of Lecopolis, Margaret Smith writes "his soul experienced becoming one substance with Him and He with it ... From the likeness of its own nature, it is changed into the likeness of God"[2].

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1. Graef :The Story of Mysticism. p.118.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.229.

Thus the spiritual marriage may be said to have two distinct characteristics. The first is the experience of incessant union with God. Says Ruysbroeck, "Whenever we feel this union, we are one being and one life and one blessedness with God"[1]. Secondly, the mystic becomes like God and God possessed. Says Dieg de Estella, "Now that we have attained through love to Thyself, we are converted into Thyself"[2].

Dionysius depicts the spiritual deification as darkness, beyond light. It is described as the vision of the divine glory, which seems dark through excess of light. According to John Tauler, the light is called darkness because it is not understood by created intelligence and is inaccessible. It is above all concepts and understanding[3].

Most remarkably and meaningfully, it has been compared with a death, a unique death which leads to an eternal life. Says Ruysbroeck:

"We and our selfhood die in God, and in this death we become hidden sons of God, and find a new life within, and that is eternal life"[4].

Sufism (Islamic Mysticism)

The word "Sufi", derived form the Arabic word "Suf" meaning white wool, is used to suggest a person who wears coarse cloths. Saints, who used cloths merely to hide their nudity not for luxury, therefore, were called Sufis. The very appellation 'Sufi' was first conferred to one Abu Hasim Uthman b. Sharik of 8th century AD who practised great austerity. Later on, it became a common title for the

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1. Ibid. p.250.
2. Ibid. p.253.
3. Graef: The Story of Mysticism. p.191.
4. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.233.

respected saints who practised spiritual life by shunning worldly pleasures like luxurious food, habitation and clothing.

Sufism is the mysticism of Islam, a religion founded by Muhammad. He, according to the Muslim belief, became prophet, when at the age of 40 he heard the voice of Lord in a cave "to recite in the name of Lord".

It is also believed that Muhammad was once taken to the Seventh Heaven on a winged horse to the presence of God, where he heard the voice of God which said: "O Muhammad, if thou speakest not, I will speak; if thou deemest thyself unworthy to praise Me, I will make the universe thy deputy, that all its atoms may praise Me in thy name"[1].

There are few passages which may be called the expression of mystic experience of Muhammad. In one occasion, he is reported to have declared, "I am not as one of you; verily I pass the night with my Lord, and He gives me food and drink".

i. God.

God, according to Sufism is absolute, eternal, omniscient, perfect and surpasses all the temporal and spatial limitations. God is transcendent as well as immanent in the world. He is the creator and the master of the world. He is the almighty ruler. Behind every deed, lies the unseen hands of God. He is the real doer.

The world, according to Sufi mystic Al. Ghazali is like a marionette, whose unseen cord is in the hands of God. Even the motives for good and bad deed come out of Him.

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1. Arberry: Sufisism, An Account of Mystics of Islam. p.29.

Jalal al din Rumi goes to the extent of thinking that even the evil finds its source in God.

God is "Al-Haq" or the Real. He is the only Real being who existed primarily. The world comes out of him as sun rays comes out of the sun. Says Ghazali:

"All existent things in this world result from the power of God and are enlightened by the Light of His essence"[1].

God is the saviour of all. The Persian Sufis believe that not only the Muslims but the souls of all will be saved at last. But, it does not mean that man is free from responsibilities of his own deeds or is not free to do his own duties. There is no paradox in the combination of the both. Says Kalabadhi:

"Whoever believes not in predestination is an infidel and whoever says that it is impossible to disobey God is a sinner"[2].

Says Ghazali:

"You hope for salvation and do not follow the way thereto. But the ship will not move upon dry land"[3].

ii. Fana

The ultimate end of the Islamic mysticism has been named Fana (by al-Junaid in the beginning). It is a death from the individual self to live in God.

There is an allegorical story for easy understanding of the stage which goes like this: once all the birds decided to visit their king and started a long journey. By the time they reached the destination-Simurg, all of them died except

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1. Smith: Al Ghazzali, the Mystic. P.168.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.307.
3. Smith: Al-Ghazali, the Mystic. P.165.

thirty. When before the king, they found a docket of their good and evil deeds, rest of them vanished[1].

It becomes clear from the above that when one reaches the state, he loses his identity. The use of the very word "Simurg" is very significant "Only thirty remained at Simurg" suggests that the stage is nowhere except one's own being[2].

The Fana is correlated by "Baqa" which means survival (in God). At Fana, the death (of individuality) is welcomed because it is nothing but the door of a new life. It is the end of one's individual life and a beginning of the life in God. It would not be out of place to notice the experience of Al-Junaid:

"The saint ... is submerged in the ocean by unity, by passing away from himself... He leaves behind him, his own feelings and actions as he passes into the life with God"[3].

Abu Yazid prays earnestly, "clothe me in Thy oneness, I shall not be there at all." For Al-Gharali "perfect absorption (Fana) means that he is unconscious not only of himself but of his absorption. For Fana from Fana is the goal of Fana"[4].

Stages of Sufi Mysticism

There are a few stages to be covered in order to attain Fana. The following are the stages of a mystic.

The first stage of a Sufi mystic is Tauba (conversion). Although conversion means formal acceptance of the

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1. Caturvedi: Rahasyavad. P.53.
2. Ibid.
3. Qt. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P.115
4. Smith: Al-Ghazali, the Mystic.p.190

religion, most of the Sufis take it to mean the resolution of an adult Muslim to devote his life to the service of God. The second stage is Mujahada, which is an earnest striving for a pious life. The third stage is Khalwa wā uzla. The mystic withdraws himself from the material world and lives a life of seclusion. The fourth is the stage of fear of God (Taqua), which strengthens the resolution of the mystic. Next is the stage of Wara where the mystic abstains from all unnecessary occupations. Then comes the stage of Zuhd when the mystic renounces even the permitted pleasures. Then there is the stage of Samt, which means silence. The mystic becomes silent both outwardly and inwardly. He controls his tongue as well as becomes silent in the heart towards the decree of God. Next is the stage of Khauf, where the mystic is afraid of committing mistakes for the fear of its future consequences. Then follow the stages like Raja (hope to the future), Huzn (sorrow for the past sin), Fu tark al shahwa (hunger but denial of appetite), Khusu and Tawadu (fearfulness and humility), Mukhalafat al-nafswadhikr uyubiha (remembering the vices of the carnal body), Qana (contentment), Tawakkul (trust in God), Shukr (thankfulness), Yakin (firm faith), Sabr (fortitude), Muraqaba (continuous awareness of God), Rida (satisfaction), Ubudiya (servanthood), Irada (desire), Istiqama (uprightness), Ikhlas (sincerity), Sidq (truthfulness), Haya (shame), Hurriya (magnanimity), Dhikr (remembering God constantly in mind), Futuwa (fulfilling the terms of the tradition), Firasa (insight), Khuluq (moral character), Fud sakha (generosity), Ghaira (jealousy for God's service, without admitting anything else to the mind), Wilaya (God's protection), Dua (prayer), Faqr (poverty), Tasauwuf (purity), Adab (decency), Safar (travel), Suhba (companionship), Tauhid (belief in one God) and noble dying. Next are the three Hals (states) viz. Marifa (gnosis), Mahabbat (love) and Shauq (Yearning).

According to some other mystics (Al-Saraj in particular), there are seven stages (Padav) and ten states (Hal). The seven stages are: conversion, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, fortitude, faith in God and satisfaction. The ten states (Hal) are: meditation, nearness to God, love, fear, hope, longing, intimacy, tranquility, contemplation and certainty.

The two distinct characteristics of the Sufi mystics are that they attach a lot of importance to the love of God and reaching a life of miserable poverty. Yahya b. Muada writes:

" ... poverty and patience are my raiment

and they cover

A heart that sees at every feast,

Its lover"[1].

"The rule of Sufi" Al-Ghazali says "is that poverty should be his adornment and patience his ornament, and satisfaction his steed and trust his dignity[2]. Abu Dharr felt that poverty was dearer to him than richness and sickness was dearer to him than health[3].

Upaniṣads and other Mysticisms: A Comparison

Having discussed the main mysticisms in the world, it is pertinent now to see the points, which are similar and different from the Upaniṣadic mysticism.

Similarities

i. Supreme Reality

In the first place, there is a striking similarity among the various mysticisms with regard to the nature of

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1. Arberry: Sufism, An Account of Mystics of Islam. P.62
2. Smith: Al-Ghazali, the Mystic. P.163.
3. Ibid.p.189.

Supreme Reality. Most of the mystics feel that the Ultimate Reality (or God we may call, for easiness of expression), is one and the only Reality like the Upaniṣads. The Sufis name it 'al Haq' (only one real) in the same way as the Upaniṣad mentions - "एको हि रुद्रो न द्वितीयाय तस्थु:"[1]. There are enormous similarities between the Tao of Taoism with Upaniṣadic Brahman. Lao Tse defines Tao as:

"The way (Tao) is like an empty vessel

That yet may be drawn from

Without ever needing to be filled"[2].

A similar passage is found in the Upaniṣad

"This is full and that is full. If full is taken out of full, remains the full"[3].

Further, Tao is described as formless, soundless, subtle and immeasurable:

"When you look at It, you cannot see It

It is called formless

When you listen to It, you can not hear It

It is called soundless

When you try to seize It, you can not hold It

It is called subtle"[4].

It is very much similar with the Upaniṣadic view that Ultimate Reality is:

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1. Sv. Up. 3.2.
2. Qt. Suzuki: Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist. P.21-22
3. पूर्णमद: पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते।
   पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते।। (Br. Up.5.1.1)
4. Qt.Suzuki: Mysticism Christian and Buddhist. P.21-22

"The soundless, the formless, the touchless (अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययम्)"[1].

It is said about the Tao:

It moves about everywhere unfailing...

The Great walks on,

Walks on to the farthest end.

And then returns"[2].

We find a similar verse in Iśopanisad:

"अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो.....

तद्धावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत्"[3].

(Even without motion It moves faster than the mind and while staying It moves ahead of those running).

Elsewhere identical expression is noticed in Upaniṣads:

"आसीनो दूरं व्रजति शयानो याति सर्वत:" (It goes a long way while sitting, and goes everywhere while sleeping)[4].

Again about Tao, it is said:

"It is born prior to heaven and earth

How still! How lonely!

It stands by Itself unchanging"[5].

Resemblance is found in the Chāndogya like:

"सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम्"

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1. Kth. Up. 1.3.15
2. Qt. Suzuki Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist. P.22.
3. Is. Up. 4
4. Kth. Up. 1.2.21
5. Suzuki: Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist. P. 23

(In the beginning, It was there, the only one, without a second)[1].

ii. Negative Definitions

The negative way of defining the Ultimate Reality adopted by Meister Eckhart is similar to the Upaniṣad. Writes Eckhart,

"God has no before no after,

God is neither this nor that

God is perfect simplicity"[2].

Nicholas of Cusa also emphasises "via negativa"[3] or the way of negation in our intellectual approach to God. It closely resembles the "Neti Neti" (not this, not this) of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka[4].

The technique of negation of Dionysius is the very technique of Upaniṣad, discussed earlier. That God is unknowable, has been widely proclaimed by the Upaniṣ ads[5].

The instructed ignorance, advocated by Nicholas of Cusa has its proximity in the Upaniṣads. As has been discussed earlier, Nicholas of Cusa holds that he who knows that he knows God, in fact does not know Him, since God is unknowable. We find similar idea in the famous verse of the Kena Upaniṣad, which says:

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1. 6.2.1.
2. Suzuki: Mysticism, Christian and Buddhist. P.21-22
3. Compleston: A History of Philosophy. P.235
4. स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा (Br. Up. 4.4.22)
5. विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात्। (Br.Up.,,4.5.15)

"He who thinks he knows Brahman, really does not know and he who thinks he does not know really knows Brahman"[1].

Hermese Tris megistus (Hermetic Mysticism) too holds:

"Of Him no words can tell, no tongue can speak"[2]. "Silence only can declare Him"[3].

This may be compared with ''उपशान्तोऽयमात्मा''[4]. Tao is also said to be inexpressible by words:

"if the Tao could be comprised in words, It would not be the unchangeable Tao"[5].

iii. God and Godhead

The concept of Meister Eckhart's God and Godhead has a similarity with the Saguṇa and Nirguṇa Bhraman.

According to Eckhart:

"God acts, the Godhead does not. It has nothing to do and there is nothing going on in it... The difference between God and Godhead is the difference between action and non-action"[6].

God, for Eckhart has goodness, active power and He is the creator of the world. Intellect, according to him cannot be satisfied with God but Godhead. Says he "The intellect is truly as little satisfied with God as with a stone or a tree

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1. यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद स:।
   अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानताम्। (Kn. Up., 2.3)
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion, P.143
3. Ibid
4. B.S.S.B. 3.2.17
5. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion, P.103
6. Qt. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy, P.173

... She breaks into the ground out of which goodness and truth break forth"[1].

iv. Transcendence and Immanence of Ultimate Reality

Like the Upaniṣads, almost all the main mysticisms of the world take God to be both transcendent as well as immanent in the world. He is invariably appreciated as the creator of the world. About Tao, it is described:

"It is bottomless: the very progenitor of all the things in the world", and also "Let us have it as mother (of all things) under the heavens"[2].

The Christianity, as has been seen, holds the same view and thinks that God created everything out of Himself while remaining unchanged, which is extremely similar to the Upaniṣadic theory of creation analogous to the spider and the cobweb[3].

v. Universal and Individual Soul

The concept of the universal and individual soul of Plotinus can be compared to the Upaniṣadic concept of Brahman and Jīva. Like the Upaniṣads, Plotinus believes in the oneness of the soul, manifested as many, a variety which does not abrogate the unity. "The souls" says Plotinus are apart without partition"[4]. It has a striking similarity to the Upaniṣadic verse[5]:

''वायुर्यथैको भुवनं प्रविष्टो रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव।
एकस्तथा सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बहिश्च।।''

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1. Pfeiffer: Meister Eckhart. 1.134
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.240
3. Mnd. Up. 1.1.7
4. Enneads vi: 4.4
5. Kth. Up. 2.2.10

(Just as the air, in the form of respiration, entering into every being becomes separate, so the only Ātman entering into different forms becomes apparently different).

Also-

"एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढ़ः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा"[1]

(He is the only god who is all-pervaded and is concealed in every being).

According to Plotinus, "God is beyond all statements"[2]. It has its similarity in the Upaniṣad:

"यद्वाचा अनभ्युदितम्"

(that which can not be expressed through words)[3].

and also:

"यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते....."

(all the words return from It...)[4].

According to Plotinus, the universe, not only is created by God, but also is existent in Him. Says he,

"That on which all depends, towards which all existence aspires as to their source and their need"[5].

There are similar ideas in the verses of Upaniṣads:

"यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते येन जातानि जीवन्ति। यत्प्रयान्त्यभिसंविशन्ति"
(That from which the beings originate, by which the originated exist, and to which they enter at last)[6].

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1. Sv. Up. 6.11
2. Enneads. V: 3.13.
3. Kn. Up. 1.4
4. T.Up. 2.9.1.
5. Enneads. 1: 8.2.
6. T.Up. 3.1.1

vi. God, in the Individual

According to Plotinus, God is "within the innermost depth"[1]. Christianity holds a similar view in maintaining that God lives in the "little heaven of soul"[2]. Both these beliefs have their similarity in the words of the Upaniṣads[3]:

"अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषोऽन्तरात्मा सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः" (As small as a thumb the self rests always in the hearts of men).

The doctrine, advocated by Eckhart that God is partless is also reflected in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad[4] where Brahman is named "निष्कलम्" (without parts).

vii. Narrow Path

There is a striking similarity between the Bible and the Upaniṣads with regard to the difficulty and narrowness of the path. The path according to the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is sharp like a razor's edge:

"क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति"[5].

Christ calls it a narrow path as follows:

"Go in through the narrow path, because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it, whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are ones finding it"[6].

In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, it is said that the Brahmā (the creator) made the senses extrovert so that they always run

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1. Enneads. vi: 8.18.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.243.
3. Sv. Up. 3.13.
4. 6.19.
5. Kth. Up. 1.3.14.
6. Bible. Mathew: 6.33.

outside, never caring to look inside[1]. There is similar expression by Plotinus:

"All their awe and admiration is for the alien. . . the mundane"[2].

His advice to gaze within has its expression in the Katha[3]:

"कश्चिद् धीरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन्"

(The wise who wishes to be immortal by knowing the inner self closes his eyes from outside and concentrates in himself).

viii. Worldly Duties

Plotinus never condemns the world or the worldly duties, but advises to do them sincerely. So also the Upaniṣ ads never advise to shun the world rather appreciates it as a step towards the achievement of goal. The Upaniṣads hold the great householders with respect. In fact most of the preceptors have been householders and kings, sincerely discharging the duties of the world. Just as Plotinus advocates the culture of civic virtues like truth etc. the Upaniṣads advocate the culture of virtues like truth etc. After the education is over the student is advised to "speak the truth" (सत्यं वद), "practise the proper way of living" (धर्मं चर), "not to neglect one's daily study (स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः), "not to cut off the thread of offspring" (प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः). One

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1. पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात् पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन्। (Kth. Up., 2.1.1)
2. Enneads. v: 1.1.
3. Kth. Up. 2.1.1.

is further advised not to neglect the welfare, not to neglect prosperity and duties towards the gods and fathers[1].

ix. Yogic Method

It needs no mention that the famous yogic practice has sprung from the Upaniṣads. The Taoism advocates the stilling of mind by control of breath. Chuang Chou, who has frequently written about this says about a person Chi who, once was leaning against a low table and his breath died down. His body almost lost contact with the soul. When asked later on by the disciple how he could make his body like a sapless tree and his mind dead ashes, and become completely different for the time being, he answered, "his self had gone clean away"[2].

The mystic in Taoism is advised to control the respiration and the mind, as is found in Tao Te Ching:

"Can you keep the unquiet physical soul from straying, hold fast to the Unity and never quit it? Can you, when concentrating your breath make it soft like that of a child? Can you wipe and cleanse your vision of the mystery till all is without blur"[3].

Likewise, Kabbalism has been highly influenced by Yoga. Bodily postures and breath control have been advocated by it. Scholem goes to the extent of calling it "Judaised version of Yoga". He writes:

"His (Abulafia's) teachings represent but a Judaised version of that ancient spiritual technique which has found

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1. T.Up. 1.11.1.
2. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.98.
3. Ibid. P.103.

its classical expression in the practices of the Indian mystics who followed the system known as Yoga"[1].

x. Non-Violence

Non-violence, as has been discussed earlier is one of the main principles of Taoism as is the case with the Upaniṣadic mysticism. Non-violence is the first and the most important component of the five kinds of Yama, the first step of the eightfold mystic path.

xi. Mystic Meditation

In one of the earlier chapters, it has been discussed that the mystic meditates on the mystical letter "Om". A similar idea is found in Kabbalism. The mystic is advised to meditate on Hebrew alphabets.

The Hesychasm (or Jesus prayer) may be regarded similar to the Japa of Yoga system. In the former case a particular prayer is repeated with every breath whereas Japa is the repetition of God's name[2].

xii. The World and Māyā

The world of Taoism may be compared to the world depicted by Sankara, whereas the matter of Plotinus is almost the same as Māyā.

Differences

There are many differences between the various schools of mysticism and the Upaniṣads, which have

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1. Scholem: Major Trends of Jewish Mysticism. p.138.
2. तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्। (Y.S., 1.28)

become clear by now. A few very remarkable distinctions may be discussed:

i. Grace

The grace of God, according to most of the mysticisms is unavoidable. It is the grace of God, which only can uplift man to reach God. Philo, whose philosophy is a mixture of Hellenistic and Jewish mysticism holds that "it is impossible to leave the ranks of mortality" without the grace of God[1]. It is grace, which inspires the mystics to go ahead. Eckhart, as discussed earlier, thinks that man is drawn away from the temporal things only with the help of grace. Says Nicholas of Cusa, "None can see Thee save in so far as Thou dost grant a sight of Thyself"[2].

In Hermetic mysticism also grace is unavoidable. "Pray" says Hermese Tris megistus, "that you may find favour, and that but one ray of God may flash upon your mind"[3]. It is clear from the above that no vision or union is probable without the grace of God.

But, grace of God is almost a remote idea for the Upaniṣads. Instead of seeking help from above, the mystic relies on his own capabilities. Instead of sensing a feeling of punity and helplessness, which is requisite for the aspiration of grace, the mystic gradually goes on feeling the greatness and gravity of his own entity. Categorically has it been expressed by the Upaniṣad: "नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यो:"[4], (the Ātmā is not available to the weak.) A feeling of self-confidence and strength is incessantly incorporated into the

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1. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.146.
2. Ibid. P.242.
3. Ibid. P.146.
4. Mnd. Up. 3.2.4.

mystics of the Vedāntic view. It is not irrelevant to quote Vivekananda in this context:

"Strength, strength is what the Upaniṣads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson, I have been taught in my life. Strength, it says, strength O man, be not weak"[1].

However, there is one verse in the Muṇḍaka, which is exposed to controversy. The stanza goes as follows:

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वाम्।।[2].

Most of the scholars interpret it as a stanza stressing on the grace of God. They translate it as following:

"The Ātmā is not attained by lectures, intelligence or listening too much (to the scriptures). Only he, whom the Ātmā chooses, can attain It. The Ātmā unfolds Itself to him only".

This interpretation makes Ātmā a discriminator and attaches no value to the personal endeavour of the aspirant.

But Sankara rightly translates the verse as following:

"The Ātmā is not attained by lectures, intelligence or listening too much (to the scriptures). The Ātmā, is attained by the very seeking of the seeker.[3]".

This interpretation emphasises the realisation of Self by one's own Self. Needless to say that this idea is pertinent to the Upaniṣadic theory of Self- Realisation.

ii. Love of God

Love of God, similarly, has a very significant place in the mysticisms of Christianity and Sufism. It is not only

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1. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol. iii. P.237-238
2. Mnd. Up. 3.2.3.
3. Mnd. Up. S.B. 3.2.3.

unavoidable but also an integral part of their philosophies. As Yahya writes:

About God's love I hover
While I have breath
To be His perfect lover
Until my death[1].

Out of the three stages of union counted in Christian mysticism, the second stage, according to the Christian mystics is the stage of burning love. "When love" observes Ruysbroeck, "has carried us above all things we receive in peace the incomprehensible light"[2]. "The God-seeking man" according to him, "who has forsaken self and all things. . . can always enter into the inmost part of his spirit. There, he feels himself to be an eternal life of love, which craves above all else, to be one with God"[3].

Love of God has never taken any prominent place in the Upaniṣadic method of practice, although a few mentions like "आत्मरतिः" and "आत्मकामः" occasionally come and in spite of the statement that "आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति"[4]. Love of Brahman or God has never been a pushing factor in the advancement of the aspirant in the way of the goal. Advice has been given to "listen, contemplate and meditate" (श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः)[5]. Knowledge, rather than love has been proclaimed as the means of liberation. The true knowledge followed by realisation of one's own self is the only way to freedom.

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1. Arberry: Sufism, An Account of the Mystics in Islam. P.62.
2. Underhill : Mysticism.P.101.
3. Ibid.
4. Br. Up. 4.5.6.
5. Ibid.

iii. Vision, Union and Realisation

The widest difference between any other schools of mysticism and Upaniṣads lies in the conception and description of mystic experience. The mystic experience of various mysticisms may be broadly divided into the vision, the union and the realisation. A short discussion is as follows.

a. Vision

For the Jewish mystics, the culmination of a mystic's endeavour is a mere vision of God. It is beyond the purview of Jewish imagination to be one with God due to "the infinite gulf between the soul and God"[1]. Philo thinks that the soul, which has visioned God is undoubtedly superior to other mortals but is not identified with God. It has an intermediate status until he comes back from the ecstasy to normalcy. Says Philo:

"The soul, who is lifted up to the vision of God is superior to man but less than God . . . we may say, quite properly that it is neither God nor man"[2].

b. Union (apparent)

Christian mystics describe the mystic experience as a union with God. But it is not considered as a permanent union where the individual loses his personal entity. The description of union is invariably followed by a qualifying denial. To analyse the words of Suso:

"This highest stage of union is an indescribable experience, in which all idea of images and forms and

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1. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.179.
2. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in World Religion. P.141.

differences have vanished . . . . the soul is plunged into the abyss of Godhead and the spirit has become one with God"[1].

But subsequently he adds,

"Not wholly; for it is still something which has been created"[2].

Meister Eckhart, while describing his experience says, "It (soul) is sunk and lost in the desert where its identity is destroyed"[3] which apparently speaks of a union, a loss of individuality. But in subsequence he disavows his own expression:

"But . . . . . what is the fate of this lost soul? Does she find herself or not? . . . . . It seems to me that . . . . . though she sinks all in the oneness of divinity, she never touches bottom. God has left her one little point from which to get back to herself . . . . . and know herself as creature"[4].

It is therefore clear that the Christian mysticism first affirms and then denies the unity and makes it obvious that the individual soul is something which has been destined to be inferior and is at a distance from God.

The Sufi mysticism more or less nurtures the same viewpoint. It describes a state of unity, "the passing" and "melting away" of individuals into God, but simultaneously denies its identification with Him, The example of Al Junaid may be referred. He says-

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1. Woods (ed): Understanding Mysticism. (The Nature and Meaning of Mysticism by Margaret Smith) p.24.
2. Qt. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P.113.
3. Qt. Stace:Mysticism and Philosophy. P.112.
4. Ibid.

"The saint . . . . is submerged in the ocean by unity, by passing away from himself . . . . He leaves behind him his own feelings and actions as he passes into the life with God"[1].

But in subsequent literature he is found to have shown eternal disunion between the creator and the creature. He says:

"So in a manner we

united are, and one

Yet otherwise disunion

Is our estate eternally"[2].

It is clear from the above discussion that the Jewish mysticism (except Kabbalism), the Sufi and the Christian mysticism have advocated a chasm between the creator and creatures, and have maintained that they can never be one. Perhaps Hilda Graef is right in observing the idea of Sufi and Christian mystics more accurately:

"The answer to this question is less difficult than might be expected: the seeming resemblance is simply due to poverty of language, which uses the same word "identity" for metaphysical as well moral unity . . . . . When St. Paul writes that Christ liveth in him the identification is a moral . . . . . "[3].

c. Union (actual)

Plotinus, the great mystic, although follows the metaphysics of Plato, has not strictly followed all the tenets of his predecessors. He favours an actual union with God.

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1. Qt. Spencer: Mysticism in world Religion. P.115.
2. Arberry: Sufism, An Account of the Mystics of Islam. P.60.
3. The Story of Mysticism. p.110.

The vision, as he prefers to call it, is the actual union. Says he:

"No doubt, we should not speak of seeing but, in stead of seen or seer, speak boldly of a simple unity. For in this seeing we neither distinguish nor are there two. The man... is merged with the Supreme, one with It . . . Beholder was one with beheld. ... He is become the unity, having no diversity either in relation to himself or anything else . . . reason is in abeyance and intellection, and even the very self, caught away, God-possessed, in perfect stillness, all the being calmed . . ."[1]. Plotinus takes the experience to be a total union with God.

d. Realisation

The Upaniṣads describe the mystic experience in a totally different manner. It is neither a graceful vision of God, nor a union, be it apparent or actual. But it is a realisation; the realisation of oneself to be the Supreme Reality. The most remarkable concept, which differentiates Upaniṣadic mysticism from the rest of it is that the individual soul, the Jīva, always has been non-different from Brahman, it has always been the same entity as Brahman: "जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापर:" (Jīva, verily is nothing other than Brahman). The Jīva, which is essentially free, is freed (subsequently): "विमुक्तश्च विमुच्यते"[2]. There is in fact no creation, no destruction, no bondage, no liberation, no aspirant, no liberated - this is the final truth[3].

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1. Enneads. vi: 9.11
2. Kth. Up. 2.2.1
3. न निरोधो न चोत्पत्तिर्न बद्धो न च साधक:।
   न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता।। (Mdk. K. 2.32)

All the physical and mental endeavour, all the restrictions, contemplation and meditations, all are meant only for the eradication of the wrong knowledge (or ignorance as it is called), which relegates Jīva to the status of non-Brahman, which makes him to believe that he is the tiny creature. In reality, the individual soul is not a creation, but misconception of the Supreme Reality i.e. Brahman. Jīva is not even an inferior reality, but is the same, identical with the one and the only Reality. The moment the ignorance is destroyed, man realises his own nature. He is free. He is, what he always has been. He is not, never was a lesser reality than the ultimate, the only one Brahman.

An Analysis

Having discussed various mysticisms of the world, one is tempted to infer that in spite of the differences there are remarkable similarities among them, which do not rule out the possibility of one's influencing the other. An impartial judgement will reveal that, the Upaniṣadic mysticism, being the oldest one is beyond the purview of being influenced by others. The reverse only may be possible. In fact a few scholars have already expressed a similar view in this context. To quote Winternitz:

"Starting from the mystical doctrines of the Upaniṣads, one thought current reaches the mysticism of the Persian Sufism, and the mystic, theosophical logos-doctrine of the Neo-Platonists and the Alexandrian Christians right up to the teachings of Christian mystics Eckhart and Tauler, and finally to the philosophy of the great German mystic of the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer[1]".

A closer and deeper study reveals that the appearance of differences between Upaniṣadic mysticism and other ones may not be very deep-rooted. Words, which are the

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1. A History of Indian Literature. Vol. I. P.247.

only means to translate the experiences into expression, are occasionally restricted due to miscellaneous reasons. It may not be highly irrelevant, for example, to mention that Mansur al Hallaj was sentenced to crucification in Baghdad for using words, which expressed his identity with God[1].

It is also observed earlier how Christian mystics have made spontaneous statements regarding their experience and then retreated as if by some outward influence or, "as if (according Stace) they had suddenly remembered their ecclesiastical superiors"[2].

Therefore the statements like that of Suso that "the soul does not become God by nature ... It is still a something which has been created", should not be regarded as his own spontaneous description of what he actually experienced, but as an interpretation more or less put into his mouth by the force of ecclesiastical authority"[3].

But, the Upaniṣadic mysticism, which has synonymised "fearlessness'' with Brahman (ब्रह्माभयं वै)[4], does not seem to have faced any outward restriction to announce its spontaneous boldest declaration; अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (I am verily Brahman), which perhaps every mystic, irrespective of place, time, and religion cherishes at the inner-most part of his heart.

Thus, it is logical to understand that all the advanced mysticisms of the world are on the different rungs of the same ladder. All of them are advancing on the same route to the same goal, where, perhaps Upaniṣadic mysticism reached, centuries ago.

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1. Stace: Mysticism and Philosophy. P.113.
2. Ibid. P.114.
3. Ibid.
4. Br. Up. 4.4.25.

CONCLUSION

The divine (Śreya) as well as the mundane (Preya) both bind the man. He who chooses the divine succeeds but the chooser of mundane fails[1]. Perhaps the secret of the present sorrow and suffering of mankind is concealed in the words of this Upaniṣadic verse. This is perhaps the reason why poor is sad and affluent is unhappy. Peace has been found neither in poverty nor in material prosperity. It seems, happiness has to be searched somewhere else, perhaps in the depth of one's own self by altering the direction of exploration from the outer to the inner world.

Mysticism, therefore seems to be a subject neither theoretical nor irrelevant, but, the most practical, highly necessary and may be said to be the only need of the hour when mankind is at the zenith of its suffering. Every serious thinker will agree to the words of JD Marquette:

"Its (mysticism's) knowledge, far from impoverishing human life enriches it with almost infinite perspectives of immense world-embracing and world-transcending possibilities, while it helps to soothe and relieve earthly ills and sufferings[2]."

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1. अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे पुरुषं सिनीतः।
   तयोः श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति हीयतेऽर्थाद्य उ प्रेयो वृणीते।। (Kth. Up., 1.2.1)
2. Introduction to Comparative Mysticism. p.204.

Mysticism is not alien to man, But unfortunately man has alienated himself from it, although definitely "each one of us has in the secret chamber of his heart, a mysterious window which can introduce him to a new and altogether different aspect of life, in a new realm of existence"[1].

The human evolution may take a novel turn and the godliness in man may exalt itself by trampling down the animal in him. The future may be forecast with the words of WT. Stace:

" ... it is possible that the direction of human evolution in future, if the human race survives will be towards the spread of mystical experience to most men and not merely its possession by a few rare individuals as now. It is possible, in short, that the super man of the future is to be the mystic man[2]".

The Upaniṣadic mysticism has moved every sensitive heart, which has come closer to it. It has provided peace and solace to the restless man from time immemorial. The utility of the noble literature has been recognised by aspirant souls from the nook and corner of the wide world. It has inspired likeminded people through the ages crossing across the man made barriers like place, culture and language.

The great German mystic Schopenhauer thinks that the Upanisads are the "fruits of the highest human knowledge and wisdom"[3] and they contain "almost superhuman conceptions whose authors can not be imagined as mere human beings"[4]. Overwhelmed by the sublimity of the Upaniṣads, he exclaims:

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1. Ibid.
2. Mysticism and Philosophy. 205
3. Qt. Winternitz: A History of Indian Literature. V.i.p.247.
4. Ibid.

"There is no other book in the whole world, the reading of which is as rewarding and solemn as that of this book (Upanișads). It has comforted me in my life and it will also comfort me while dying"[1].

Prof. Maxmuller, who has devoted a greater part of his life in the study of oriental spiritual literature feels honoured to confirm the statement of Schopenhauer in the following words:

"If the words of Schopenheauer require any confirmation, I would willingly give it as a result of my life long study"[2].

The Upanișads have the strength to energise the whole world, to set the weak free from the thraldom of weakness, to stand on his own feet. The words of Swami Vivekanand may be recalled when he says:

"The Upanișads are great mines of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world. The world can be vivified, made strong energised through them. They will call the trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the down trodden of all races, all creeds, all sects, to stand on their feet and be free"[3].

The mysticism of the Upanișads, thus, aims at building man a perfect and complete being, an embodiment of happiness, not by running away from the world and the duties thereof, but by living in it and discharging every assignments. with sincerity and morality. It leads man to a life, not helpless or miserable, that man usually lives, but a vigorous and fearless, a virtuous, better and truer existence indeed.

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1. Ibid. p.248.
2. The Vedanta Philosophy. P.5.
3. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Vol. iii.p.237-238

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